



# THE INDEPENDENT

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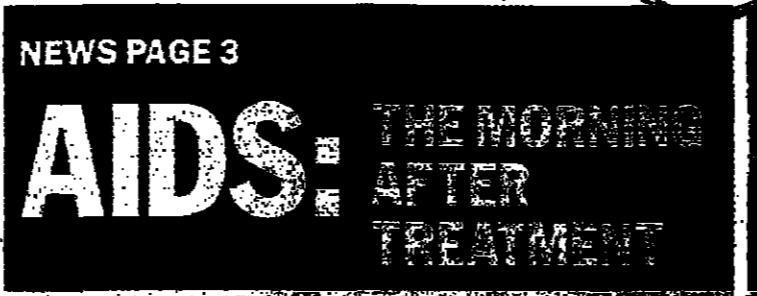
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POP AND CLASSICALFAMILY & PEOPLE:  
LIFE IS DANGEROUS AT YOUR PERIL

## The truth about health



### Story behind Labour stunt

**The NHS is what voters are talking about, while the parties trade insults and fantasy budgets. So what's the real outlook?**

Steve Boggan

It was a simple Labour stunt designed to demonstrate Tony Blair's popularity with former Conservative voters – but behind it lay a truly devastating critique of the disintegration of the National Health Service.

The Labour leader was taken to his spin doctors yesterday by 69-year-old Elsie Butler's home to "canvass" her as a potential switcher. In fact, she had already decided to vote Labour but the untold story behind her change of allegiance will cause Tory strategists nightmares – she was angry at the appalling treatment meted out to her sick husband, Douglas.

Next Thursday, she says, is "payback time".

After Mr Blair had left her home in Morden, south London, unaware of her astonishing history, Mrs Butler told *The Independent* about the moment she lost faith in the Tories. For 30 years, she has been waging a battle against cancer: she has Mr Butler, they have each had their bowel and bladder removed. She has lost her womb and he has lost part of a lung.

Together, they have a unique view of three decades of NHS change. They say those 30 years represent a decline in patient care, culminating in Mrs Butler taking her husband from a filthy bed at the St Helier Hospital in Carshalton, south London – the hospital where John Major was born – to nurse him at home.

"He had had his bladder removed and I saw him there in the hospital, lying in his own dirt, fading away and I vowed to get even," she said. "I felt like Dirty Harry with his Magnum 45. I wanted to point it at John Major and say 'Make my day'."

"Well now my day has come and it's payback time."

The Butlers describe the devotion of doctors and nurses at the Royal Marsden Hospital

and St Helier's as "magnificent". But they say cutbacks and the internal market have resulted in a deterioration of standards and apparent shortages in staff.

"I have voted Tory since 1979 but I don't believe the NHS will survive five more years of them," said Mrs Butler. "Things are getting worse. When I first started getting treatment, things were fine. But now there are mixed sex wards, not enough beds, dreadful shortages of nurses and appalling food."

The treatment is so degrading. Can you imagine what it's like to be changing your tubes and things and turn round to find that there's a male patient there watching you on your ward? Why do we need mixed-sex wards?"

Mrs Butler began having doubts about voting Conservative after Mr Butler's bladder operation five years ago.

"I was appalled," she said. "He hadn't even been washed. He was lying there in his own dirt, with tubes everywhere and the nurses were simply too short staffed to care for him properly. He was fading away. I broke my heart. I had to clean him myself. I don't mind that, but I shouldn't have to."

Mr Butler, 69, a former BT engineer who has always voted Labour, said: "They lined up a place for me in a hospice and, basically, I was expected to die. But Elsie insisted on taking me home and nursed me back to health. I owe my life to her. There must be thousands of people like us all over the country. Well, now we plan to get our own back."

The couple are now healthy and optimistic, thanks, they say to their surgeon, Christopher Jones, although they say they are no longer seen by the hospital appointments – "They think we're past it," said Mr

Butler.

Mrs Butler's decision to vote Labour was made only three months ago after being persuaded by her husband to attend a meeting at the Burnt Bullock pub in Mitcham, where Tony Blair was addressing an audience of Tory wavemakers.

"I gave him a hard time," she said. "But I emerged convinced. He's sincere and I think I can trust him. At least you know he believes in the NHS."

Oblivious to the Butlers' trials, Mr Blair left after sharing tea and biscuits with other switchers. After his departure, there was little doubt that his commitment to the NHS was sincere. Questions remain, however, over whether Labour can afford it.

Jeremy Lauance  
Health Editor

Mr and Mrs Butler are not unique. Their experience of the health service is an example of the growing pressures on a system that is failing to cope. In spite of politicians' efforts to ignore it, the evidence from the doorsteps and from polling shows that the state of Britain's hospitals and medical services heeds the voters' concerns.

They have good reason to worry. The demands on the service posed by an ageing population and medical advances are rising, but available plans up to the millennium, on which both main parties agree, show virtual zero growth.

Waiting lists are rising and health authorities, short of cash, are arbitrarily restricting treatments.

The unequal provision of NHS care in different parts of the country is forcing patients to change their addresses in order to obtain the treatment that they need.

In the last week, *The Independent* has learned of a patient who has waited 13 months for heart surgery, of a cancer sufferer forced to rely on charity to pay for her drugs, a sick woman left for 14 hours on a trolley while doctors searched for a vacant bed and a multiple sclerosis sufferer who faces the prospect of moving to another part of the country to obtain the treatment that he needs.

Medical organisations say inequity is growing and the notion of the NHS providing equal care for all is a myth.

They say rationing is inevitable and that with a fixed budget the

pressure to ration will grow. The parties refuse to accept the logic of the argument, insisting that with adequate funding rationing can be avoided.

Last week, nine medical charities wrote to the three main party leaders calling on the next Government to monitor the availability of treatments on the NHS and issue central guidance on which should be provided.

Peter Carty, chief executive of the Multiple Sclerosis Society, said: "The impact of ill health and disability is identical wherever people live, but availability of treatments is all

more important to distribute the available resources fairly. There must be more honesty and explicitness over what the NHS will provide."

Some analysts argue that Britain needs a "Bill of health rights", setting out what the public may expect from a publicly funded health service.

This ought to be preceded by a public debate on which elements should be considered part of the "core" service and which are optional extras.

The argument between the two main parties has focused not on these substantive issues but on the cost of running the NHS internal market, put by Labour at £1.5bn a year.

The Tories are sensitive to the charge and last year Stephen Dorrell, the Secretary of State for Health, ordered a 5-per-cent cut in management costs. Labour pledges to save £100m in the first year by reducing costs in the most over-managed authorities and trusts. Over the long term, Labour claims it can cut bureaucracy by 90 per cent. It says these savings will fund long-term growth in services.

Mr and Mrs Butler plan to vote Labour, to save the NHS. But the service needs a real increase of 3 per cent a year in funds, equivalent to £1bn, to meet rising demands. NHS managers say it is inconceivable that management savings will yield that sort of sum.

The future of the NHS rests on the tax-and-spending plans that neither Labour nor the Tories have the honesty to disclose prior to the election. That leaves voters, such as the Butlers, making a leap in the dark.

### THE INDEPENDENT HARRIS POLL

Labour 48%  
Con 30%  
Lib Dem 15%  
Others 7%

Change since last week:  
Labour +8%  
Con -1%  
Lib Dem +2%  
Others -1%

Conservative predictions that Wednesday's ICM poll heralded a "collapse" in Labour's poll ratings are scotched by today's *Independent/Harris Poll*, showing Labour's lead unchanged at 18 points.

ICM's dramatic poll for the *Guardian* showed Tony Blair's lead cut from 14 points to five in the space of a week, but now three other polling companies which were carrying out interviews at the same time report no significant change.

MORI in the *Times* yesterday put Labour's lead at 21 points up four from the previous week, while Gallup in the *Telegraph* has Labour's lead unchanged at 20 points.

While most pollsters remain nervous about their predictions of the levels of support for the parties, it seems there has been no significant movement in public opinion yet – on the surface at least.

Harris Research interviewed 1,177 adults face-to-face in their homes between 18 and 21 April.

### THE BROADSHEET

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### But who'll pay?

Diane Coyle  
and Anthony Bevins

reversed. David Richardson, its president, said: "The last thing any government should ever do if it is trying to manage the economy effectively is to box itself in like this way."

But they are boxed in. All of the dividend from the strong economic growth expected this year and next will be needed to close the excessive gap between tax revenues and government spending. The reduction in borrowing will also depend on meeting the ultra-tough spending target accepted by both Labour and Conservatives. As the Institute for Fiscal Studies has pointed out, the planned growth in expenditure in the next three years is lower than the average rise during any parliament of the past 80 years.

The Tories and Labour played a game of fantasy budgets yesterday. Would Labour have to raise £12bn to pay for employment schemes, and lower VAT on fuel? Or would the Tories have to find more than £15bn to abolish inheritance tax and boost Britain's cadet forces?

It was a bitter row, with John Major plainly accusing Tony Blair of lying. But it is the kind of row you have with your husband over how to spend your lottery winnings when you never even buy a ticket.

Yesterday's political panoply coincided with a fresh call from business for higher taxes. The British Chamber of Commerce said the penny cut in the basic rate of tax that has just come into effect should be too big to close.

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## news

## significant shorts

**Police question youth over nine-year-old's car death**

Police were yesterday questioning a 16-year-old youth after a 9-year-old girl was knocked down and killed by a stolen car.

Telri Bethan West died instantly when the blue Vauxhall Nova struck her after mounting the pavement opposite her home at Morganstown, near Cardiff, on Wednesday night. Sean Rogers, 14, a neighbour who was with her, suffered serious leg and pelvic injuries, and was detained in Cardiff Royal Infirmary.

Officers said the arrested driver of the car later failed a breath test, and a youth was being questioned at Fairwater police station in the city. A police spokeswoman said: "We need to speak to any witnesses of this very tragic accident. We are particularly anxious to trace the occupants of a maroon-coloured car which was in the vicinity."

**Two life sentences for twins' killer**

A double killer was given two life sentences at the Old Bailey yesterday for the brutal murder of identical twin brothers whose battered bodies were found floating in a canal.

David Dillon told a friend that Christopher and Anthony Langford had gone for a "long swim" after he bludgeoned them to death in an apparently motiveless attack. He wheeled their bodies through the streets in a shopping trolley before dumping them in the Regents Canal in north London. The 38-year-old twins, who lived on the streets of the capital, were the sons of a retired teacher and came from Bedfordshire, the court heard. Dillon, 38, an unemployed decorator originally from County Cork, had denied murdering the brothers between February and April last year.

**£175,000 damages to pop designer**

A former fashion designer who dressed rock stars David Bowie and Gary Glitter was yesterday awarded £175,000 agreed damages for the carbon-monoxide poisoning that devastated his life.

Allan McRae, 46, who once worked with top couturier Norman Hartnell, was exposed to the fumes over a 14-year period in his council studio flat in Islington, north London. He said resulting health problems caused his business to fail in 1983. Ten years later, he was made redundant from a teaching post and remains unemployed, the High Court was told. Doctors have diagnosed frontal-lobe brain damage, which affects memory.

In December 1992, Mr McRae reported a faulty gas fire to the London Borough of Camden, from whom he let the flat in 1979. It was finally disconnected in February 1993. A spokesman for the borough said: "We accept that ultimate responsibility lies with the council", and added that in the past 18 months, rigorous checks on gas appliances have been carried out in nearly 30,000 homes.

**Animal magic at pet awards**

Animal-mad celebrities mingled with heroic pets and their proud owners at the pet world's answer to the Oscars yesterday as hundreds of animal lovers turned out for the 1997 WAG Awards at the Intercontinental Hotel in London.

Among the pet-struck stars present were Jilly Cooper, the best-selling novelist, who picked up the personality of the year award in recognition of her lifetime support for animal welfare; Johnny Morris, the former presenter of *Animal Magic*; and the Channel 4 racing presenter, John McCririck. The ceremony, hosted by Liza Goddard, and organised by animal insurers Pet Plan and the Animal Health Trust charity, paid tribute to outstanding bravery and talent among Britain's pets. Shandy, an 11-year-old golden labrador from Feltham, won the dog's award for twice saving his owner's life, and Solomon, a two-year-old British Blue cat from Dorset, took the feline prize for rescuing and protecting broods of tiny house martins whose nest had collapsed.

**When is a wedding not a wedding?**

Around 25 Irish couples have been affected by a legal loophole which has left their church marriages invalid.

The problem, which could undermine family succession rights, arose from new family-legislation aimed at harmonising church and state marriages. Last year, for the first time, the state stipulated that couples must notify state registrars three months in advance of their intention to marry. The instruction's purpose is to ensure that couples reflect on their decision to marry, and so reduce the numbers of hasty unions breaking down. Newly passed legal amendments will retrospectively validate the status of 84 couples who believed they had notified registrars correctly before marriage. But 25 other couples will have no option but to go down the aisle again because they were in such a rush they neglected to give any notice at all.

Alan Murdoch

**School's drive for a new teacher**

An overcrowded village school is to raffle a car to pay for a new teacher, after budget cuts forced governors to lose one member of staff last year. The cuts, at Kirkburton Church of England First School, near Huddersfield, forced the 105 pupils to study in three classes of 35. Joyce Worsfold, the head teacher, said a fourth full-time teacher would enable her to reduce class sizes and so improve children's education. Now the school hopes to raise £20,000 by selling 20,000 tickets at £1 each, with a prize of a brand new Citroen AX car. The school is buying the £8,500 car from a local dealership at a cut-price £5,000, mostly raised through donations from local businesses.

Lucy Ward

## THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

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Spain	£6.30
Sweden	£9.21
USA	\$3.00

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## people



Reach for the sky: American Linda Finch sets off yesterday from London on her round-the-world flight in tribute to the aviation pioneer Amelia Earhart.

**Woman who lied about age is the world's oldest mother**

A 63-year-old California woman who lied about her age to receive *in vitro* fertilisation treatment has become the world's oldest mother, after giving birth to a healthy girl last year, it was revealed yesterday.

Her case reopens the debate over so-called "test tube granny mums" but British fertility experts yesterday warned that to deny treatment solely on the grounds of age was "neither possible or desirable".

In this case, the woman, who has not been named, was well past menopause and became pregnant with an egg donated by another woman, but fertilised with her 60-year-old husband's sperm. She gave birth last November to a 6lb 2oz girl by Caesarean section and then breast-fed the infant.

The woman, a Filipino-American, deceived the clinic even though it put her through a rigorous physical check. In a statement, the clinic added: "Had the individual disclosed her actual age she would not have qualified for treatment, since the programme uses an arbitrary upper age limit of 55." Before her, the oldest mother record was held by an Italian, who was only a few months younger at 62 when she gave birth in 1994.

While menopause denies women the ability to conceive normally from their own eggs, it would seem that for as long as they are physically strong and have a healthy uterus, they can have a child from an egg fertilised *in vitro*.

A spokeswoman for the British Medical Association said patients should not be denied treatment on the grounds of age or sex, but the best interests of the child should be paramount.

Dr Richard Nicholson, editor of the *Bulletin of Medical Ethics*, said that if a woman gave birth at 63 "there is considerable likelihood one or other parent will die when the child is still in the teenage years".

In the past the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority has said in general, women in their fifties should not be given treatment because of the difficult children would face. But Susie Rice, chief executive of Issue, the national fertility association, said yesterday: "Chronological age is not an indication of physical age or condition and it is not possible or desirable to make hard and fast rules saying people over a certain age cannot be treated".

David Usborne and Glenda Cooper

**IRA Maze escaper back behind bars**

An IRA fugitive who escaped from Northern Ireland's Maze prison in a mass breakout 14 years ago was back behind bars in Dublin last night after being detained by Irish police serving an extradition warrant. Dermot McNally, 39 (right), was arrested at his home in Sligo early yesterday by Gardai acting on 14 extradition warrants supplied by the RUC.

McNally, 39, from County Armagh, was serving a life sentence for causing explosions when he escaped with 37 other IRA members in September, 1983.

Most of the Maze escapees were rearrested near the jail, but 19 got away from the area.

McNally appeared before Dublin District Court yesterday afternoon. The father-of-two, wearing a green jacket, cream shirt and jeans, arrived at the court amid high security at 4pm.

McNally had been living openly in Sligo after court rulings in the Republic that prevented the extradition of other Maze escapees.

In March, 1990, the Republic's Supreme Court refused to extradite two of the escapees - Dermot Finucane and James Pius Clarke - on the grounds that their offences were political.

Sgt Heffernan said the warrants related to making bombs, possession of bombs and bomb-making equipment, causing explosions, possession of firearms and one count of wounding with intent to commit grievous bodily harm.

In addition, the warrants alleged McNally had been sentenced to 20 years imprisonment for the various offences and that he unlawfully escaped from custody on September 23, 1983.

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In March, 1990, the Republic's Supreme Court refused to extradite two of the escapees - Dermot Finucane and James Pius Clarke - on the grounds that their offences were political.

McNally, originally from Lurgan, in Co Armagh, was jailed for life in 1977 for causing explosions.

He was given three life sentences for bombing a wine lodge, a post office and a railway station.

**Woman sues over love-cheat Romeo**

A dating agency is being sued by one of its clients, after it fixed her up with a married man. Divorced Margaret Ruddlesden, 47, wrote "lying bastard" on Alwyn Phillips' underpants and thrust his clothes into the hands of his wife when she realised.

Ms Ruddlesden had paid £417 to join Close Encounters (of the Best Kind) after moving to Bristol and was soon in the arms of Mr Phillips, 47, who worked in a frozen food depot.

But the affair was swiftly curtailed when she realised he was living with his wife, Theresa.

Yesterday, Ms Ruddlesden told the *Western Daily Press*: "Alwyn's car was parked outside my house when someone crashed into the back of it. The police turned up and Alwyn had to give his details. From that moment on his attitude changed."

"Until then it had been red roses and chocolates and he even asked me to marry him. But after the accident he didn't ring for days. I knew something was wrong."

When she went to his home his wife answered the door. The next day he finally phoned and agreed to meet her to collect some of his clothes. "I was enraged. I stitched labels in the back of his pants, then I wrote 'lying bastard' on the back of them."

The agency has now offered to return the introduction fee.

## briefing

## EDUCATION

**Number of college students continues to increase**

The number of students in further education colleges rose this year, for the third year running, to just under 2.5 million, according to figures released yesterday. Data from the Further Education Funding Council shows that sixth-form colleges, with 154,000 students in 1996-7, are among the institutions with the biggest increase. The colleges which often have a strong academic reputation and score highly in exam league tables, attracted 11 per cent more students than last year.

The number of older people enrolling in colleges has also contributed to the rise in overall numbers, with an 11 per cent rise in those aged 60 and above returning to learning.

The trend reflects colleges' attempts to seek out new student markets among adults in order to hit government-set recruitment targets amid tough competition with schools for sixth-form age students.

Further education students were this year studying for 3.6 million qualifications, a fifth of them A-levels. Second most popular were GCSEs, followed by the government's National Vocational Qualifications, which test competence in particular trades and skills.

## TECHNOLOGY

**Home of the future unveiled**

Computer giants IBM, Intel, Compaq and Hewlett-Packard have put a lot of thought into making people think less in the cyberhome of 2000. Their house of the future, unveiled this week at San Francisco's Blasthaus Galleria, features a range of gadgets, from electronic butlers to computerised grocery lists, designed to ease the stresses of modern life.

A 42-inch flat-panel screen in the living room, showing the film *Bladerunner*, uses no cathode ray tube, and no enormous box; just a huge picture on a thin screen, priced at \$20,000.

Intel's Car-PC, meanwhile, is loaded with software that recognises your voice. Give the word "radio" and it tunes in. Say "phone" and it dials a number. And when away from the house, IBM's prototype video doorman is your butler. Ring the bell and a voice booms out: "No one's home, but leave a video message."



## HEALTH

**Breakthrough for arthritis treatment**

A pioneering inflammation therapy offers new hope for sufferers of rheumatoid arthritis, it was announced yesterday. Researchers from 11 European countries, led by Barry Bresnihan, Professor of Rheumatology at University College, Dublin, have developed a naturally occurring chemical messenger made by the body so that it can be used as a treatment.

The chemical, Interleukin-1a (IL-1a), regulates another messenger, IL-1, which promotes inflammation and the destruction of cartilage and bone.

A six-month trial has now been completed involving 472 arthritis sufferers at 41 hospitals in 11 countries. They were split up into groups and given different amounts of IL-1a.

Those given the maximum 150mgs-a-day dose showed a significant improvement over the placebo group at 24 weeks. In addition they experienced a slowing in the rate of damage to the joints. The trial was continued for a further six months and improvement was maintained throughout the one-year follow-up period. No important adverse effects were reported.

The findings were reported at the annual meeting of the British Society for Rheumatology in Harrogate.

## IMMIGRATION

**Limited citizenship for 200,000**

More than 200,000 people living in Hong Kong were granted a limited form of British citizenship last year in the run up to China taking control of the colony. The Hong Kong residents have obtained British Dependent Territories citizenship, which entitles them to visit the UK without a visa and offers them British consular protection in other countries.

An additional 5,511 were given full British citizenship last year. The huge influx - just 29,000 people from Hong Kong gained part citizenship in 1995 - reflects fears of Chinese repression.

In total, the number of people granted British citizenship, excluding those from Hong Kong, rose to 43,000 in 1996, a slight increase on the previous year.

Persons Granted British Citizenship, 1996, Home Office research directorate, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT

Jason Bennetto

## THE INDEPENDENT

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# Morning-after drug could stop Aids

**Jeremy Laurence**  
Health Editor

A "morning after" treatment for people exposed to the Aids virus, HIV, is proving successful in preventing them becoming infected, doctors say. The treatment - the same cocktail of drugs used to treat people with established HIV - can reduce the chances of infection by 80 per cent if given immediately after exposure to the virus.

Because the role of the drugs as a preventive measure has

been concealed in case it encouraged unsafe sex and triggered a rush for expensive drugs - some doctors have claimed that the treatment is not being made available to that need it.

Studies have shown that in pregnant women with HIV and people jabbed with contaminated needles, antiviral drugs given promptly can stop transmission of the disease, either to the baby or the injured person. Scientists believe that prophylactic treatment following unprotected intercourse with an

HIV-infected person can also restrict transmission, although no studies have been done.

AZT, the Aids drug can reduce the risk of transmission to the baby from 26 per cent to 8 per cent when given to pregnant women with HIV before and during delivery, and to the infant for six weeks after birth. In people jabbed with used needles, AZT treatment for three to four weeks afterwards reduces the risk of infection by 80 per cent. Guidelines in the US recommend that health work-

ers who suffer needlestick injuries should be treated with a cocktail of three drugs for four weeks afterwards.

A review of Aids drugs in the *Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin*, a guide for doctors published by the Consumers' Association, says prophylactic treatment should be offered to HIV-infected pregnant women to prevent infection of their babies and to people injured by contaminated needles. But it says there is no agreement on whether people should get it

after unsafe sex. Dr Joe Collier, editor of the *Bulletin*, said: "Prophylactic treatment after unsafe sex should be thought through carefully and shouldn't be overlooked. There are unusual circumstances - such as rape - where it could be appropriate but people don't know about it."

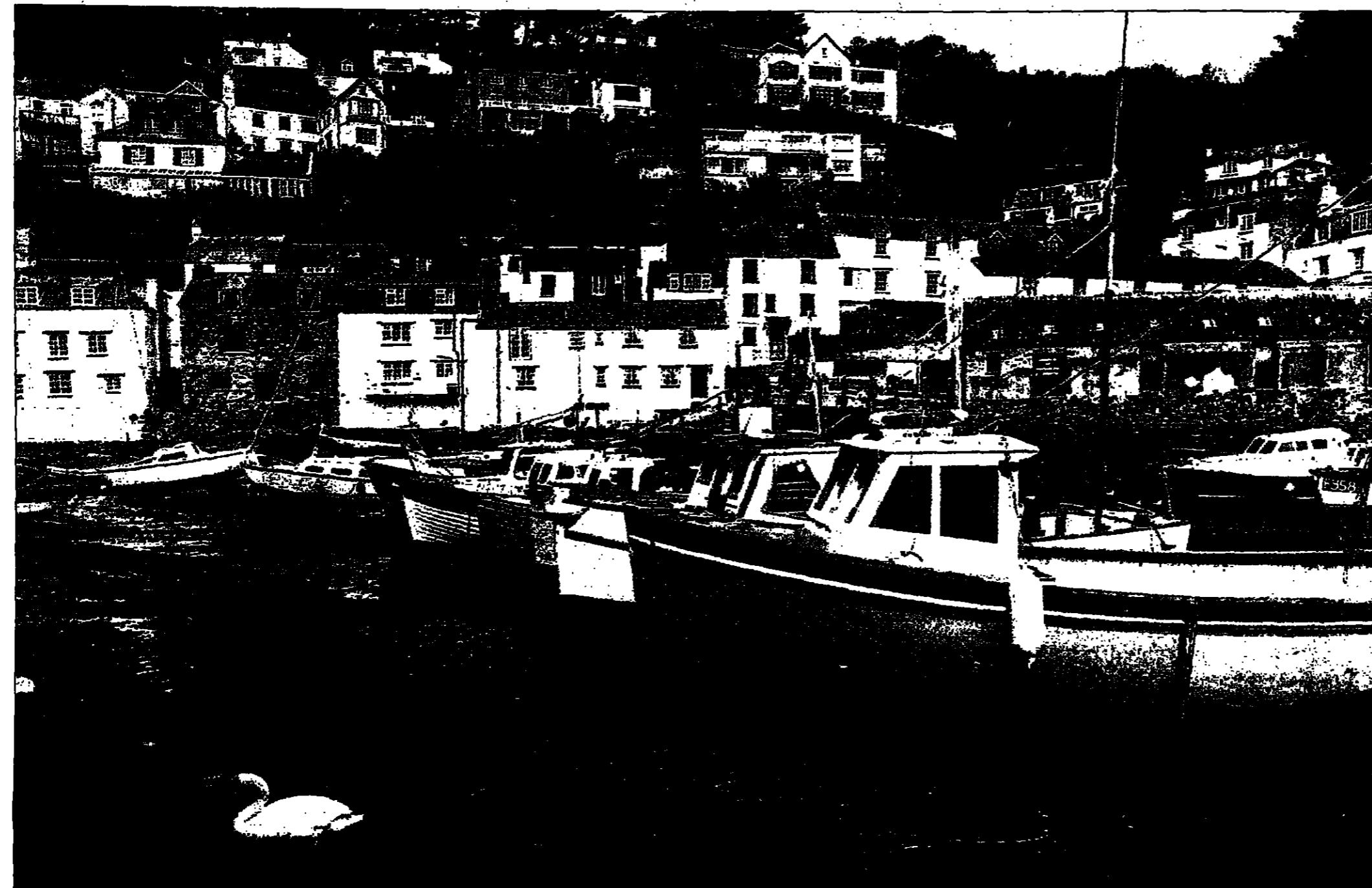
Some doctors in the UK had already prescribed the drugs to patients after risky sex and a study of their efficacy as a preventive measure following unprotected intercourse was beginning in San Francisco. Dr

Collier said, "If you get a scratch with an infected needle it is crucial you get down to a clinic quickly and get treatment. It can reduce the incidence a lot. The same is true for HIV-infected pregnant women."

"For people exposed to the virus through sex, it is more difficult. Aids doctors don't want people phoning up every morning after they have had unsafe sex. That is an abuse of the arrangements when they should be wearing condoms or having safe sex."

Professor Michael Adler, head of the Aids clinic at University College Hospital, London, said most hospitals now had a policy of testing pregnant women and health workers who suffered needlestick injuries but there was concern at the development of a "morning after" mentality in relation to sex.

"These drugs are toxic and four weeks' treatment costs £600. If people feel there is a morning after pill and they don't have to have safe sex it sends the wrong message."



Blue Water, white death: Freddie the Swan cruising in Polperro harbour, where locals have been watching in horror as he murders scores of local ducklings

Photograph: Apex

## Murder, mayhem and a Swan called Freddie

**Mark Rowe**

It is a tale of murder, intrigue and dark threats. The Cornish fishing village of Polperro, population 1,585, has been split down the middle by its resident swan called Freddie.

Freddie, after the fashion of his Hollywood namesake Mr Krueger, has created a nightmare on Polperro Street.

A territorial creature at the best of times, the cob swan has reacted to his mate, Phreda, coming into season by killing ducklings in the village harbour to make sure any bread available goes to his own offspring. Last weekend he is said to have maimed and then drowned 12 ducklings.

In a dramatic escalation of the feud between the pro-duck and pro-swan factions, dead ducklings have been pushed through the letter box of the Three Pichards public house, whose landlord has been accused of being pro-swan.

This prompted the licensee, Andy Puckey, to put a poster on his front door that reads: "Latest score: Swan 6 Ducks 0. And will the secret postman/woman have the courage to reveal themselves? I doubt it!" Police from Looe were called in to remove the poster because they were concerned it might cause a breach of public order. They reprimanded a teenage boy for the duckling deliveries but took no further action.

Mr Puckey admitted that he used to be pro-swan but says he now wants to see them gone as much as anyone.

"It's for their own safety really because one of these nights that cob is going to end up dead," he said.

Some residents who have decided enough is enough took to the water last week during one of Freddie's frenzies to stop the slaughter.

Monica Field-Johnson said: "I went out in a small boat and was trying to put him off byashing him over the head with a plastic paddle. But it was like hitting a wasp with a dingle.

"It's most unpleasant. He grabs the ducklings as they come bobbing down the river, throws them in the

air and drowns them. You find dismembered ducklings all over the harbour. It makes the children cry."

"He is a particularly butch and macho swan and has got to be removed by legal means otherwise somebody is going to take the law into their own hands."

Harbour trustee, pro-duck Graham Jolliff said those who wanted the swan to stay saw the swans as substitute children. "There are lots of old dear who have adopted the swan because their children have left home and they have no pets."

"But this harbour is no place for swans. When young swans are learning to fly they have the problem of all the wires round the harbour. They go straight into the

chimneys and we are forever picking them up when they are injured."

A spokesman for Devon and Cornwall police said: "It has split the community down the middle. Our only concerns are for public order and that the birds are not harmed in any way. We can't actually arrest the swan for murder."

For most of the 10 years he has been in the village Freddie adopted a less militant approach towards his feathered neighbours and was a village favourite. Residents even clubbed together to buy a raft for him to nest on.

Two years ago, Freddie killed around 80 ducklings, prompting some villagers to spray him with washing-up liquid.

The RSPCA said it had no plan to remove Freddie and Phreda. "The swan is doing what comes naturally and is defending the food for its own offspring," said spokeswoman Julie Briggs. "We would seek to prosecute anyone caught spraying him with detergent."

Mr Harcup, a society member, said he could understand why the Priory Church's limited capacity meant that Elgar's most famous works were unsuitable, but thought lesser-known pieces should be performed.

"I don't see how one can have an Elgar Festival with no Elgar," he said. "It is daft to call it an Elgar Festival when there is no Elgar. It's quite unbelievable. Elgar got engaged in Malvern and if he was still alive I think he would be very upset."

Mr Harcup said the change to a smaller venue should have been an opportunity for organisers to liven up the composer's lesser-known works, such as his church music, which would be perfect for the venue.

But Mr Boughton, the artistic director at the centre of the controversy, said that Elgar's larger works, such as *Dream of Gerontius*, could not be performed for financial reasons and because of poor acoustics. "Including his minor works would be just tokenism," he said. "It would be disrespectful both to Elgar and the audiences to put in a few little pieces of his just to placate people. The arts are not about placating people - they are about stimulating people."

The event was to have been staged at the town's Winter Gardens, where, Mr Boughton said, Elgar's music will definitely be heard next year: "I can assure people Elgar will be back in '98. The reasons for that are artistic and financial. I am sorry they are not having their beloved Elgar, but I have too much respect for him and his music to reduce him to a token."

Hywel Davies, secretary of the 250-strong West Midlands branch of the society, said: "One understands that a few people are upset about this. It's a shame, but I think it's out of our control."

"You can't expect someone to put on a concert and lose money, but our society will live through it; we are a broad church."

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## news

# Bungles stop EU aid going to poorest

Sarah Helm  
Brussels

Large amounts of Britain's £1.5bn share of EU regional-aid money have been directed by the Government towards its favoured projects, while failing to ensure that funds reach the neediest in Britain's poorest areas, according to European Parliament figures.

Delays and bungles by government administrators in distributing funds caused debt and even bankruptcy among bodies such as colleges and voluntary groups as they waited for their cash. The report also discloses that Britain's public utilities have been fattened up with £450m of regional-aid money, before and after privatisation.

The report confirms suspicions that the Government has tried to obscure the importance to Britain of EU structural funds, which are to help the poorest regions.

In many cases where suc-

cessful job-creation projects have been launched with EU money, the Government claimed the credit for itself. The parliament, which adopted the report yesterday, levels its strongest criticism at the way public utilities became major recipients of the structural funds in the 1980s and early 1990s, even after privatisation.

Europe's structural funds are specifically intended to promote job creation, but these same utilities have been engaged in massive job reduction and downsizing, says the report, which cites 300,000 job losses in five privatised companies.

The report's author is Arlene McCarthy, Labour MEP for the Peak District, who based her studies on 25 hours of evidence from parties across Britain, and 2,000 questionnaires. British Conservative members of the parliament yesterday voted against the report.

However, money distributed largely by government-appointed committees often fails to reach recipients as a result of low staffing, over-centralisation and lack of planning. Many groups in the voluntary sector, as well as training colleges and small businesses, are deterred from applying for funds because of fears about delays and debt, says the report.

In one case a college in Humberstone ran up £200,000 in debt because funding agreed for a training scheme arrived two years too late.

**Pole position:** A fisherman putting up stake nets at St Cyrus beach in Aberdeenshire for the start of the salmon and trout season. The method is unique to St Cyrus and has continued for more than 100 years, but is threatened by dwindling stocks due to over fishing and seals

Photograph: Colin McPherson

## Kinnock demands damages for truckers

Colin Blackstock  
and Katherine Butler

Neil Kinnock, the EU transport commissioner, yesterday called on the French to compensate hauliers caught up in the two-day blockade of Channel ports, while British ferry companies are threatening to enforce fines of up to 150,000 francs on the fishermen involved.

In Brussels, Mr Kinnock accused the French of renegeing on their promise to pay out compensation to victims of last year's French lorry drivers strike.

In a letter to French transport minister Bernard Pons, Mr Kinnock complained that many road haulage companies from neighbouring countries had

suffered "significant" damages because of the blockade. He demanded that similar levels of compensation as promised during the truckers dispute be applied this time.

Mr Kinnock's office has been inundated with complaints from road haulage companies who say their claims have still not been dealt with.

Brussels does not have the power to order compensation be paid and can only exert moral pressure on the French.

Mr Kinnock admitted he was still waiting for Paris to submit a report detailing the number of compensation claims it had dealt with to date, but said French sovereignty had to be respected.

"Obviously it is frustrating for

me not to be able to intervene directly, but the people who are calling for that would be the first to express their outrage if Brussels intervened in a dispute in their country."

The ferry companies affected by the dispute were considering their options yesterday. A spokesman for Stena Line said Stena, P&O, and SeaFrance were all granted injunctions against the fishermen involved in the blockades and were entitled to ask the French courts to impose fines of up to 150,000 francs on each boat.

However the spokesman said it was unlikely they would seek to enforce the fines available through the injunction for the sake of diplomacy.

It is clear that they would have to

invoke the injunctions if the fishermen decided to blockade the ports again. "I think the danger of not pursuing these fines means that any future injunctions against more blockades lose force. If we seek an injunction and then fail to follow it up then it really negates that course of action in the future."

Under the terms of the injunction each boat involved in the blockade can be fined 10,000 francs per hour for every hour it remains in the blockade after the injunction is served.

The French fishermen were served the injunction at 7pm on Wednesday evening, but did not leave until 10am yesterday morning.

Meanwhile the EU fisheries

spokesman Filippo di Robilant said it was up to the French to seek a review of the controversial rules on fishing net sizes which triggered the blockade.

Paris had not asked for the regulation, designed to conserve fish, to be amended and it would in any case have to persuade a majority of EU partners if the legislation was to be changed.

Mr Di Robilant said Brussels would oppose a revision of the law scheduled to come into effect in January because the restrictions were needed to conserve fish. The blockade, he said, provided further "clear evidence that there are too many fishermen chasing too few fish".

Leading article, page 19

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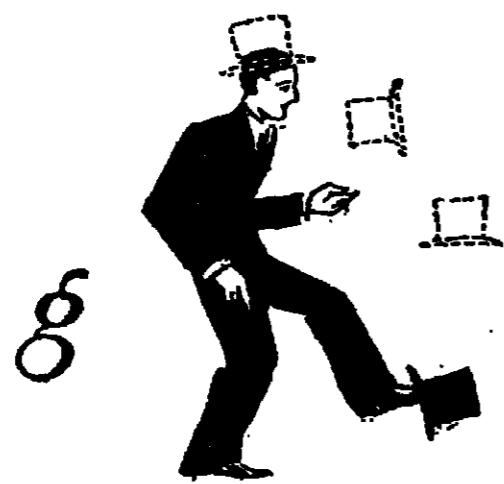


Fig. 7. Juggling and balancing with difficult objects.

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## Haughey was 'skint', stores chief claimed

The former Irish Prime Minister Charles Haughey was described as "skint" by a businessman who was lending him more than £1m, a Dublin tribunal heard yesterday.

The word was used by the former shopping chain magnate Ben Dunne in a conversation with his one-time financial services adviser.

The adviser, Julian Harper, told the official inquiry into payments to politicians by Mr Dunne: "I presumed he meant [Mr Haughey] had money problems."

Mr Harper said he had arranged for the transfer of cash from the stores boss and added: "Everything about Mr Dunne was unusual."

Earlier this week Mr Dunne, ousted as chairman of his com-

pany four years ago, told the tribunal chairman Judge Brian McCracken he had given a total of £3.1m to Mr Haughey between 1987 and 1991 because the then-premier was experiencing financial difficulties.

Mr Haughey has not taken up the opportunity to be legally represented at the hearing, but in a letter to the tribunal he has denied getting any money from Mr Dunne.

The businessman has listed a number of other politicians, political parties and other groups to whom he made payments over a number of years.

Evidence of cash received for campaign funds by the Irish Labour Party was given to the tribunal yesterday by party leader and deputy Irish Prime Minister Dick Spring.

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# Charities warn over poor diet of young

Glenda Cooper  
Social Affairs Correspondent

Large numbers of British children could suffer malnutrition in the next century unless urgent action is taken, according to food experts.

Two major reports published today say that families living in deprived areas without access to supermarkets and little money are unable to give their children an adequate diet.

The reports have been conducted by Save The Children which is best known for its famine relief work overseas, and the National Food Alliance which represents national public interest organisations.

Save The Children interviewed mothers in London, Glasgow, Coventry, Sunderland and Belfast. It found that they understood the need to eat more fruit and vegetables. They were also resourceful shoppers and were willing to go into debt or miss meals themselves to prevent their children from

going hungry. But they had restricted access to cheap food, being forced to use expensive local shops.

The survey's results were backed up by a report by the National Food Alliance attacking "the main misconceptions about eating healthily on a low income".

The report found that between 13 and 14 million people live in households where the income is below 50 per cent of the UK average - less than about £120 a week. Many of these families eat as little as 95g of fresh green vegetables each week, equivalent to barely one Brussels sprout per person per day.

Poor households consume almost twice the amount of full-fat milk as the well-off, and more than double the amount of white bread.

In 1995, a study of the costs of a modest but nutritionally-adequate diet to meet the needs of women, especially when pregnant, found their diet cost an average of £18.12 and could cost as much as £23 a week if there was no supermarket nearby - representing up to 60 per cent of the whole benefit payment for women aged 18-25.

"Cheapest calories come from foods generally considered unhealthy," continues the report. "To get all the calories needed in a day when spending the least money the best bet is to go for a high-fat sugary diet - biscuits, sweet tea, white bread with hard margarine."

The idea that low-income families would spend any extra money on "fags and the lottery" is also a myth. Given £10 extra a week 46 per cent of low-income families say they would spend it on food.

The groups called on the Government to implement a national strategy on food and low income, and carry out a comprehensive assessment of social security benefits. They also called for free school milk to be reinstated.

□ "Out of the Frying Pan: The True Costs of Feeding a Family on a Low Income" is available from Save The Children Publications, 0171 703 5400. No charge, but the charity welcomes donations.

□ "If they don't eat a healthy diet it's their own fault" - Myths about Food and Low Income" is available from the NFA, 5-11 Worship St, London EC2A 2BH priced £20.

## A basket full of healthy food

This is the weekly shopping basket that would provide a realistic and nutritionally-adequate diet for an 11- to 14-year-old boy - who requires 2,220 calories a day

Packet of cornflakes/weetabix; one loaf brown bread; one loaf, wholemeal; 1 pkt crisps; 385g tin of baked beans; 3 yoghurts; spaghetti; 100g tin of tuna; three 200g tins of tinned tomatoes; 3 onions; 4 oranges; 4 pears; 5 apples [one for baking]; 3 bananas; 1 small pack of peanuts; tin of pilchards; 350g [12oz] of potatoes; 80g [2oz] carrots; 90g [3oz] cauliflower; 65gm [2 oz] peas; 60gm [2oz] carrots; 180gm [6oz] chips; 60gm [2oz] sweetcorn; 100g [3.5oz] rice; 1 cucumber; 4 tomatoes; 90g [3oz] cabbage; 140g [4.8oz] broccoli; 2 large jacket potatoes; 250g [8oz] of chicken; 76gm [2.6oz] corned beef; 70gm [2 oz] ham; cod in crumbs 120gm minced beef; 2 fish fingers; 2 rashers bacon; gravy; tomato soup; vegetable soup; Edam cheese; 4 eggs; 1 tin kidney beans; 1 chocolate mousse; 120g tinned peaches; custard; 6 serviette biscuits; 1 Mars bar; trifle; 1 slice of pineapple; marmalade; 2 currant buns; teacake; 2 pieces of fruit cake.

Total cost: £18.12

Source: Poor Expectations 1996 by the Maternity Alliance

Bereaved father's claim for his wife's benefits could end up costing the taxpayer millions



Lone parent: Kevin Willis in London yesterday to draw attention to the difficulties that widowed fathers face. He intends to take his case to the European Court. Photograph: Nicola Kertesz

## 'My children have lost a mother. Why must they lose cash as well?'

Simon Reeve

A widower launched proceedings against the Government in the European Court of Human Rights yesterday in a case which could cost the Treasury hundreds of millions of pounds in extra payments to bereaved fathers, who currently receive less state money than widowed mothers.

Kevin Willis, from Bristol, is bringing up two young children on his own after his wife Marlene died of cancer last June. Although a woman in his position would qualify for a one-off payment of £1,000, and a weekly sum of nearly £85, Mr Willis is forced to live off diminishing savings.

Mr Willis gave up work to care for his wife after her con-

dition was diagnosed in 1990, shortly after the birth of their second child. "We sat down together and talked about finances because we knew she hadn't got long to live and Marlene desperately wanted her children to have a decent upbringing," said Mr Willis. "We knew there wasn't much support available and we knew we had to save money quickly."

Mrs Willis worked as a housing officer for Bristol Housing Authority until 1993, when she had to leave because of her health. "She knew how difficult a mortgage can be for just one partner, and the relief on her face was obvious when we made the last payment the next year. She knew that whatever hap-

pened to her, there would be a house to live in for all of us."

Mr Willis previously worked for nine years as a field service engineer, which involved travelling away from home, and he is now determined to look after his children full time. Yesterday, he rushed back to Bristol from a round of television interviews and meetings in London to take his daughter to a Brownies meeting.

"While I am caring for them I will only be able to take a low-paid part-time job. Many fathers in my situation have to make a decision between losing their children or losing their home," said Mr Willis. "I am not prepared to let my family fall into that poverty-trap after what we

have already been through."

The family are now surviving on their savings, which Mr Willis believes will last for another four years, plus child benefit and £100 a month from his wife's pension.

The Child Poverty Action Group said that although there were other state benefits for widowers it was unfair that men such as Mr Willis are worse off than women in similar situations. "Based on recent cases we believe we have a strong case," said David Thomas, the CPAG's legal officer. "However, rather than force Kevin to take his case all the way to Strasbourg, we would like to see whoever is in power after the election change the rules to reflect the reality of modern life."

## How to avoid loss where wife is the breadwinner

Nic Cicutti  
Personal Finance Editor

Bereavement is a terrible enough trauma without the financial uncertainties that can follow when the family's breadwinner dies.

Although those most likely to be affected are women whose partners have died, a significant number of men face the same problem. According to the Child Poverty Action Group, between 20,000 and 40,000 widowers are denied such benefits.

Figures from the Office of National Statistics show women are the sole breadwinners in 563,000 families where the husband is unemployed.

The most effective way to protect oneself in such cases is to take out insurance. Before taking that step, it is worth checking whether there is a life insurance cover as a work-related perk.

For a 30-year-old couple just starting a family, joint term assurance of £80,000 for 20 years to cover their children's early years costs about £15 a month.

Finally, critical illness insurance, a relatively new type of policy, pays out on diagnosis of several so-called "dread" diseases, including cancer, sudden strokes and heart attacks.

In most cases, the breadwinner's death should lead to the family's mortgage being paid off through separate life cover linked to the loan.

Here, it is important to ensure that both men and women are jointly named on the insurance. If the home and the insurance were in the husband's name only, but the mortgage is paid only by the woman, in the event of her death the loan may not be paid off.

Life cover is the main alternative for those who fear leaving their dependents in a financial mess if they die. The cheapest option is so-called term assurance, where cover is taken out for a limited period. If the policyholder dies in that time, the insurance pays out. The reverse applies if the policyholders survives.

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## THIS SATURDAY IN THE LONG WEEKEND



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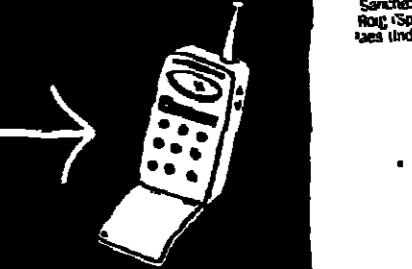
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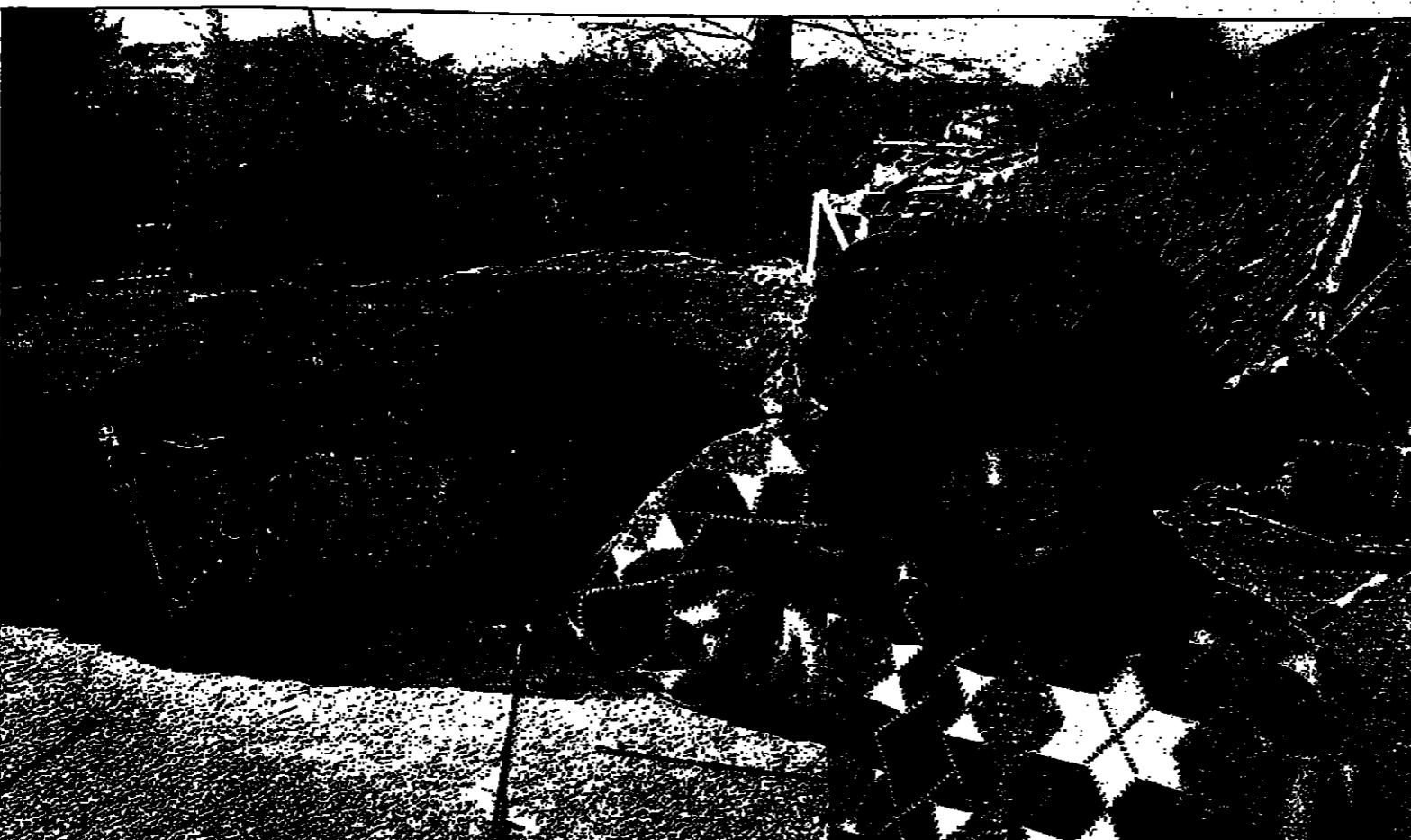
## news

Families in a hole as the earth opens up

**Esther Leach**

A hole in the ground big enough to swallow a house developed overnight in Ripon, North Yorkshire, forcing at least five families to leave their homes. The hole, thought to be a naturally occurring cavern, opened up minutes after two children who had been playing on the site were called in by their mother. It grew bigger overnight and a nearby house garage fell into the chasm, which was filled with water.

Jane Sherwood-Britton, whose £95,000 house in Ure Bank Terrace faces the hole, said she had lost everything. "Our house is not safe to live in and it's now worthless. The hole appeared at about 7pm just as I called my children in. We called the emergency services and we were told to evacuate, but I stayed overnight. I just didn't want to leave my home. At 2am I heard a loud whirring noise, water shot up



Close shave: Jane Sherwood-Britton and the 40ft-deep hole that appeared in her garden, wrecking the garage

Photograph: Peter Byrne/Guzelian

into the air and the garage slipped into the hole. It was like a whirlpool."

Mrs Shepherd-Britton is staying with friends nearby and is taking legal advice.

A spokesman for Harrogate council said officials were investigating the cause of the sudden appearance of the hole. They believe it could be a geological fault involving gypsum,

which is dissolved by water and can cause sudden collapse, especially if found close to the surface of the ground. John Kirkman, chief building control officer for the council, said:

"People have been instructed to move out of their homes in the interests of their own safety. We are monitoring the situation and until insurance engineers and independent engineers can assess the level of danger they cannot move back in." Gas and electric companies were on standby to switch off supplies to the street at a moment's notice and police have sealed off the area.

**Jeremy Laurence**  
Health Editor

Users of paints, glues or cleaning agents containing solvents may suffer damage to their nervous systems if they do not protect themselves, scientists say.

Solvents commonly used at work and in the home can cause serious long-term neurological damage when inhaled or brought into contact with the skin. Studies show that people exposed to the chemicals have suffered symptoms ranging from tingling and numbness to muscle weakness and loss of feeling.

In more advanced cases, when the brain is affected, the symptoms may mimic those of multiple sclerosis or dementia, with loss of memory, inability to think clearly and depression. One high-dose exposure of low-level exposure over a long period can be enough to cause damage.

Professor Roberta White and Dr Susan Proctor, environmental health experts at the University of Boston, in Massachusetts, say in the *Lancet* that almost 10 million people in the United States have daily contact with solvents and the number is rising with increasing use of the chemicals in new

technologies. Workers in solvent-using industries, such as paint production, car manufacture and dry-cleaning are at greatest risk of nerve damage, but people using paints and glues at home may also be at risk, they say.

Many of those affected recover spontaneously as soon as they stop using the chemicals but, for others in whom symptoms persist, treatments are limited.

Patients whose moods have been affected may be helped by therapy and anti-depressant drugs.

The authors say prevention is essential by ensuring levels of solvents in the air are kept low and that workers wear masks.

They cite the case of a 50-year-old glazier who had spent his professional life working with solvents but never used a respirator and had only worn gloves for two years.

He suffered numb fingers, headaches, dizziness, depression and impotence.

He was advised to stop work and one year later reported a remarkable improvement in mood and said the outside world seemed clearer.

However, he still felt irritable, had a poor memory and had lost his sense of smell.

### DAILY POEM

#### Poem of the Summer Angels

for Annette — who lent me the Round House for two perfect days

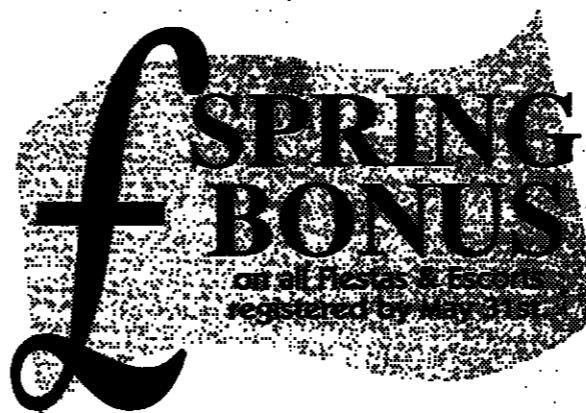
By William Haywood

*They came so gently I was not afraid  
Nor spent in dizzy and remote excess  
They came in every swimming of the light  
Among the beech cathedrals, where each bell  
Rings out its certain note. They came like bees  
Seducing the enraptured peonies.  
They came in silences as cool as lakes  
Under a woodland moon, where wild duck make  
Quick shafts across the sky or nightlong doze  
In reedy pools that cup the rippling stars.  
They came like buried childhoods in the hills  
The bird-tongued air the land that walks away  
To solitudes stronger than any gods.  
They came in peace, to tell me what I know.  
May they come so  
for you.*

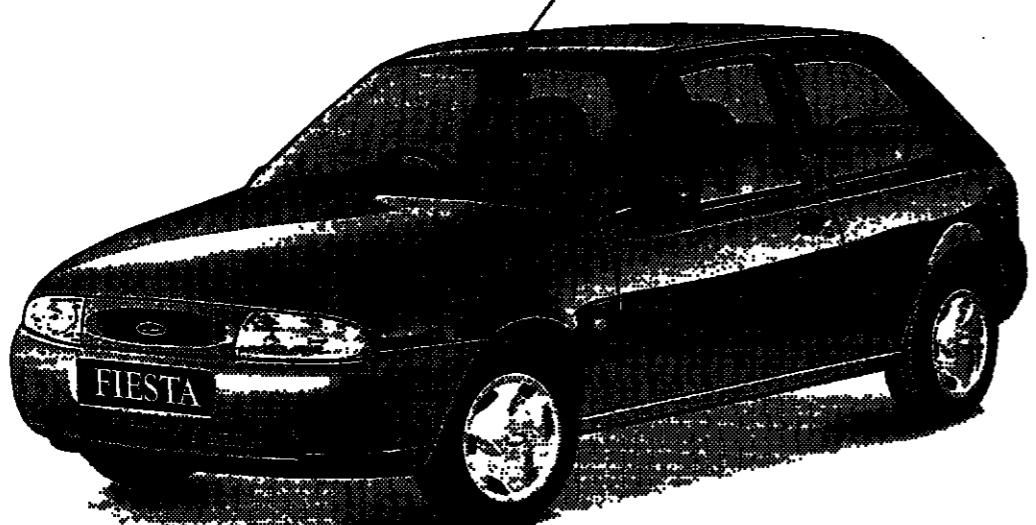
This poem completes our selection from *Earth Ascending*, edited by Jay Ramsay (Stride, £9.50). On Monday, 28 April, we will publish the winning poem in the 1997 Peterloo Poets open competition: *Alice and the Birds*, by Anna Crowe.

**Petronella Wyatt runs off with Imran Khan.**

“THE WOMAN CALLED OUT, ‘ELEANOR, IT’S THAT JEMIMY.’ Petronella Wyatt goes in search of the Goldsmith campaign against David Mellor in Putney and gets mistaken for Jemima Khan. Plus other local election limerics. Only in *The Spectator*, out today. PULLED AT MY JACKET. ‘DON’T YOU LOOK SMART. BUT WHERE’S YOUR OLD MAN?’ ”



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Total amount payable	£8,516.86	£9,723.02
Term (months)	95	95
Number of monthly payments	94	94
Monthly payment	£98.89	£121.53
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**THE SPECTATOR**  
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# THE INDEPENDENT election '97

## Tories use tax as the fear factor

**Party leaders trade blows over fiscal policy**

**Anthony Bevins**

**Political Editor**

An exchange of Labour "fibs" and Tory "evasion" marked the start of the final week's election campaigning yesterday as John Major and Tony Blair tried to scare the voters.

The Conservative leader warned that if Labour was elected, their promised July Budget would include a tax package that could raise £1.2bn. The Labour leader said later that the Conservatives were addicted to value-added tax, and they planned to slap VAT on food.

Mr Major denied any intention of doing that, bluntly calling the Labour allegation "a lie". But he did not answer a direct question about extending VAT to other basic items, like children's clothes, or books.

"We have no need to raise taxation," he said. "We have set out spending plans and taxation plans and there is no need to get involved in ruling out VAT. I do not believe it is going to be necessary."

Mr Major said: "What is now self-evidently the case is that they propose to spend the last week of this campaign frightening the sick, frightening the elderly, frightening the vulnerable by spreading deliberate fibs and scare stories they know have absolutely no basis whatsoever."

As for Labour warnings that the Tories proposed to privatise state pensions, Mr Major said that was "absolutely scurrilous".

Conservative governments had up-rated the state pension each year, and would continue to do so, he said. "There is not a shred of basis in fact for the scares they have been putting about," he added.

But while both leaders have attacked each other for using scare tactics, both yesterday tried to put the frighteners on the electorate.

Referring to Labour's planned windfall tax on privatised utilities, Mr Major said it was a tax which "they cynically claim wouldn't hurt anybody."

He said that was not true; people would be hurt by it. "It would put up the cost of mak-

ing a telephone call or heating a room with gas or electric stove. It would hit pensioners and cut the value of shares held by millions of savers."

That was just "for starters". Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, then issued a "menu" of tax increases that Gordon Brown, the shadow Chancellor, could choose to use, to fill the alleged £1.2bn "black hole" between his spending and revenue plans.

He said that Labour would need to increase taxes by £640 a year for every household in the country to balance the books.

However, when Mr Major was asked for his plans on the tax burden, he did not answer the question, and the answers to repeated questions on VAT did not provide any assurance that the VAT base would not be extended, or that VAT rates would rise.

The shadow Chancellor said Mr Major had spent the election evading the answer. "From now until election day, the Prime Minister must be hounded until he matches Labour's commitment not to extend VAT to food, children's clothing, public transport fares, and books and newspapers.

If he fails to do so, the British people will know what to expect from a fifth term Tory Government - more on VAT essentials."

Mr Blair told *The Independent* at his election press conference: "If we can get the tax burden down for ordinary families of course we want to do that. But we are wary of making guarantees to people precisely because we do not want to repeat the mistakes Mr Major made in the last election."

He added that he was also wary because "we are going to inherit a situation where the public finances are in a very, very poor state ..."

"But of course a 10 pence starting rate of [income] tax would help [ordinary families] and I think if we possibly can help them we should." He said that if there was scope for tax cuts under a Labour Government, that is where it would be done.

### Windfalls ripe for the picking

Kenneth Clarke set out a menu of options for Labour tax increases yesterday, but some of them wouldn't fit as well for a Tory Chancellor as a Labour one. Here is a list of choices facing a government of any complexion wanting to raise extra revenue.

#### Restrict personal allowances to basic rate

#### Abolish married couple's allowance

#### Abolish mortgage interest relief

#### Abolish exemption of child benefit from tax

#### Abolish exemption of incapacity benefit from tax

#### Extend VAT to private education and health

#### Increase corporation tax rate by 1 per cent

#### Cut rate of advance corporation tax credit by 1 per cent

#### End tax exemption of first £20,000 redundancy pay

#### Extend VAT to rent on domestic dwellings

#### Extend VAT to rent on commercial properties

#### Extend VAT to betting, gaming and lottery

#### Extend VAT to domestic passenger fares

#### Extend VAT to international passenger fares

#### Extend VAT to children's clothing

#### Extend VAT to water and sewerage services



Now we're really motoring: John and Norma Major trying out an XJS during their visit to the Jaguar factory in Coventry. Photograph: Tom Pilston

**Colin Brown**

**Chief Political Correspondent**

John Major will make himself the message tonight with an election broadcast aimed at winning back doubting Tory voters.

The election broadcast was filmed last night at Downing Street by the Prime Minister who curtailed a day of campaigning in the Midlands and the North-east, to begin a media blitz.

The Prime Minister's broadcast will go out tonight to be in sharp contrast to Labour's "Tony Blair: The Movie" - screened last night. The script was agreed by the Prime Minister after talks with Lord Saatchi late on Wednesday night during a return flight from Scotland.

Our strategy is to show what it will be like under a Labour government. It is part of the big media push," said one senior Conservative source.

The Prime Minister will un-

## Major is the message in search for floaters

derline his warnings that a Labour government would threaten prosperity and sign up to a federal Europe - two issues which Tory strategists believe have been making wavering supporters think again in the final days of the campaign.

It will be followed up by the Prime Minister in a series of television interviews on Sunday, the BBC *Panorama* programme on Monday, and Radio 1 on Tuesday.

Labour will enter the final week of the campaign by changing the emphasis to the "rewards" of a Labour government, focusing on their five pledges including

taking 250,000 young people off the dole.

That strategy was set out in Labour's "war book", but the Tories are keen to use Mr Major's personal popularity to persuade the "don't knows" to turn back to the Tories.

Mr Major privately concedes that he wished he had been able to speak more directly to more people but he continued to insist yesterday that the message on the doorstep was different from the polls.

He is refusing to give up in the face of expected defeat, as he did in 1992, although he is clearly looking as though the long campaign has taken its toll on his reserves of energy.

He toured the Jaguar plant in Coventry with his wife, Norma, to underline the economic changes which have taken place since the days of Red Robin and demarcation disputes.

He sat behind the wheel of a Tory blue XJS sports car costing £56,625 but Mrs Major, who drives a Rover, said: "John doesn't earn enough to buy a Jaguar."

If he loses next Thursday, that may change.

Mr Major has not been allowed to drive a car since becoming Prime Minister in November 1990, for security reasons, but he may be given

new freedom to do so if the Tories are forced into opposition.

He may also soon be able to afford the Jaguar.

Close friends have predicted that after delaying standing down to prevent an unsightly scramble for the leadership, he may go back to the City, possibly returning to his former career in banking.

It is possible he could still play an important role, even *out of office*, in the development of a single currency. Executives at Siemens have made it clear they support the single currency and Jaguar executives were also in favour of the "wait and see" approach.

Bibiano Boerio, the finance director of Jaguar, said: "From my personal perspective, it's probably something you need to keep shaping and managing."

"I'm a fighter and if you have an idea where you want to be, it's best to be involved and to help shape it."

The judge said he recognised that freedom of expression was an important human right, but, having seen the offending transmission, he supported the BBC's decision. He described the film, which includes footage of what he said were "mangled and mutilated" aborted foetuses, as "indeed shocking".

The offending sections were blurred over with a statement saying that the broadcasting authorities had censored it and "if something is so horrifying that we are not allowed to see it, then perhaps we should not be tolerating it".

Josephine Quintavalle, spokeswoman for the alliance, said: "We are taking advice about appealing to Europe but it is obviously too late for this broadcast. We see this as a wider issue than pro-life. We are very concerned that a few media people have control over political expression."

The alliance last night put the full uncensored version of the broadcast on its site on the internet.

## Blair targeted in the final push

**Colin Brown**

Tony Blair will be targeted for an intensified attack by Tory party leaders in the final push for the last seven days of the general election campaign.

Tory strategists privately say they have identified Mr Blair as one of the key targets, in order to undermine Labour's election campaign and restore confidence in floating Tory voters.

John Major will step up his assault on Mr Blair's U-turns over policy, including Scottish devolution, but will leave the more personal attacks to leading spokesmen such as the party chairman, Brian Mawhinney.

The personal attacks on Mr Blair, which have included advertisements showing the

campaign, which will intensify over the weekend, with no let-up by Mr Major on Saturday, will also focus on what the Tories claim is the "spiral of silence" by Labour over its economic plans, including a proposed June budget. They will attack Labour for failing to show where the money is going to come from to plug the alleged £1.5bn black hole in Gordon Brown's plans.

The economy has been the main theme of the Conservative campaign, with the slogan "Britain is Booming". Tory strategists believe the message is beginning to have its effect on the opinion polls but will also link it to evidence of widespread Euroscepticism.

Mr Major will attack Mr

Blair for threatening to give away British sovereignty at the same time as risking more job losses. "We are going to go on Europe, Europe and Europe. Europe is big and doing us well," said the source.

Conservative tracking polls showed the gap with Labour fell from 11 to six-and-a-half per cent at the start of the week, after heavy attacks on Labour over Europe. Mirroring the ICM poll in the *Guardian*, the Tory tracking poll showed Labour's lead had slipped to five points, which the Tory strategists said had raised morale at Central Office: "We feel that we can really do it now."

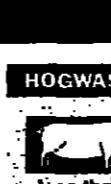
Mr Major continued to play down the polls yesterday and said it was too early to say what

the result of the election would be. But he warned: "The election on the doorstep will be very hard fought."

Although he has professed his confidence that he will win, Mr Major said yesterday: "I don't think anyone can predict with any certainty what the result will be."

Last night, he launched the final push by staking his hopes for victory on a twin attack on Mr Blair over his approach to Europe and the Scottish parliament. In spite of Cabinet splits over Europe between Kenneth Clark and Michael Howard, Conservative strategists believe the voters have discounted the disunity factor and that their Euro-sceptic message is sinking in.

### THE HURRIED VOTER'S GUIDE



#### THE CAMPAIGN

The Liberal Democrats began "Take Our Daughters to Work" day by highlighting new evidence from the Fawcett Society that women had been all-but invisible during the election campaign. The party launched its own plans to get a fair deal for women both at home and at work.

Meanwhile, the other two parties continued to trade jibes over pensions, VAT and the economy. While the Conservatives claimed Labour's plans would leave a £1.2bn "black hole" in the public finances, Labour claimed the Conservatives' plans would cost £1.5bn.

Labour unveiled its eagerly-awaited video before its leader, Tony Blair, promised a future of "one nation" politics for Britain.

Answering questions, Mr Blair reiterated the allegations under the Conservatives that state pension would not be safe and that VAT could be imposed on such items as food and public transport. These claims were soon denied by the Conservatives.

John Major, meanwhile, removed himself to Coventry and Teesside, where he made a series of visits aimed at showing a balanced economy.

He claimed Labour would put the country's competitiveness at risk by imposing European-style industrial policies and tax levels - the European Social Model.

#### KEY ARGUMENTS

Both Labour and the Conservatives were in fighting mood.

Tony Blair began the day with the spectre of a fifth-term Tory government. "The choice is very simple. You either wake up [on 2 May] to the same old Tories who have got away with everything they wanted to, or a new start under Labour," he said.

Later Stephen Dorrell, the Health Secretary, hit back. "A rabbit caught in the headlights looks positively relaxed when compared with Mr Blair," he said.

Meanwhile another Conservative, the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, was content to leave personal attacks to his colleagues. He was more interested in blowing his own trumpet.

"Immodest - you are allowed to be immodest in elections - I lay claim to being the most successful Chancellor of the Exchequer since the war," he told the BBC's Today programme.

Malcolm Bruce, the Liberal Democrats' treasury spokesman, was in equally upbeat mood during a BBC radio phone-in.

"If the people of this country want a competitive economy and tax levels - the European Social Model.

#### GOOD DAY

Paddy Ashdown got a boost when an opinion poll revealed 13 per cent of voters thought the Liberal Democrats had run the most positive campaign so far.

Compared with only 11 per cent for the Tories. More good news came when Lady Margaret Beaufort, daughter of the former Tory prime minister Sir Winston Churchill, said she was returning to the Conservative Party. The latest news came from the Liberal Democrats, who said they had won 15 per cent.

ONE TO REMEMBER

Voters were offered something to look forward to yesterday when John Prescott announced that he and Tony Blair would dance round a maypole in Downing Street after the election in return for people coming out to vote. "Tony Blair and I will dance around that maypole in Downing Street - providing we get everyone out to vote," he told voters in Tynemouth. "So let's go around knocking on doors."

#### BAD DAY

Conservative candidate Jerry Hayes was recovering after being hospitalised for the second time in the election campaign. He made the mistake of putting his hand through a window while delivering an election communication. The dog on the other side was fought on the streets and injured on the cause of leaflets. Jerry Hayes visited hospital earlier this month after being punched in the face by a stranger while he was

#### HOGWASH

Pledge by Labour's Jack Cunningham: "Within a decade we could see Britain back where it should be, among the top 10 in the Olympics. I'm not saying number one or number two, but at least in the top 10, the place that we used to hold some years ago". Liberal Democrat sports spokesman Menzies Campbell could not resist responding: "Only Liberal Democrats are going for gold by providing real resources to make the difference to sport in schools."

#### THE OTHER PARTIES

The ProLife Alliance lost its bid for permission to fight a decision by television stations to screen its party political broadcast. A High Court judge ruled that there were "no grounds" for a judicial review.

Meanwhile, today sees the launch of the Elysie Yours party. Included in their

revolutionary manifesto will be plans to introduce compulsory IQ tests for MPs, installing a seismometer in the Commons, and the abolition of Council Tax to be replaced by a special tax on the lecture tours of Margaret Thatcher. The only problem is that they have launched the party too late to field any candidates.

#### MEDIA STAR

Suleiman Khan has more reason than the rest of us to be sick of the campaign.

## THE INDEPENDENT election '97

**Vote for insanity,  
you know it makes sense**

Matthew Brace

Britain is not booming, it is barking - barking mad. Ask anyone standing on Westminster Bridge yesterday afternoon in the presence of Screaming Lord Sutch and 30 candidates standing for his Official Monster Raving Loony Party.

With the slogan "Vote for insanity: you know it makes sense", Lord Sutch launched his party's manifesto, spelling out a brighter future for the nation.

On health: free prescriptions, dental treatment and hearing aids and the compulsory wearing of wigs. On crime: standard-issue tandooris for traf-



Mad? John Major looks like Peter Friel posing with Monster Raving Loony 'Batwoman' on Westminster Bridge yesterday

Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

fic police involved in high-speed pursuits. On education: a return to basics - the four Rs of reading, writing, rock and roll. And, on the burning issue of Europe: butter mountains to be made available for training British Olympic skiers, a ministry for el-

ders and disabled was tested out by Steven Norris, the Conservatives' transport minister last year.

Some Loony policies are not quite as mad as they make out. A proposal to introduce special ramps on the backs of buses to allow easier access for the el-

veteran rock 'n' roll star and boxer, has had to pull out of his own personal campaign to look after his elderly mother who has suffered a fall. And another of his candidates has run into hostility. Organisers of an election meeting in the Bradford North

constituency last night banned Sutch's man, Wild Willi Beckett, from attending, saying they want to cover serious issues. Conservative, Lib Dem and Labour candidates will all get a fair hearing while Wild Willi is said to be wild with rage.

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# Labour still 18 points ahead

John Rentoul

After the headlines generated by ICM's dramatic mid-week poll, today's *Independent/Harris* poll shows Labour's lead unchanged at 18 percentage points, in line with other polls, painting a placid picture of public opinion.

But, while most pollsters are confident that the trend shown by ICM was due to statistical error, they are all nervous about the levels of party support.

Tom Simpson, managing director of Harris, is working on

an estimate of what would happen if there were a late swing to the

Conservatives of the same order as in 1992. On average, the final

polls were nine points adrift then, with about one-third of the

error down to out-of-date

information about the make-up

of the electorate. So if voters

have the same last-minute

change of heart as five years ago,

Labour's lead may end up being

six points lower than in the

opinion polls.

"Now the same factors may not be at work, but it would be a legitimate exercise to do alongside our final poll next week," Mr Simpson said. But on Harris's numbers this time it would only cut Labour's lead to 12 points, and leave Tony Blair with a Commons majority of just over 100 seats.

The unusual feature of Harris's poll in the run-up to this election is that the number of don't knows has risen during the campaign, instead of falling as expected. From 12 per cent five weeks ago, 16 per cent are now saying they do not know how they will vote.

This feature, reflected in other

polls, has been seized on by the

Tories as evidence that there is

"all to play for". But many of

these are already counted by the

pollsters as "say Tories" on the

basis of how they say they voted

last time, and who they think the

best prime minister would be.

Only MORI refuses to make this

adjustment.

Today's *Independent/Harris* survey also continues to suggest the Labour vote is firmer than the Tories'. Of Labour voters, 80 per cent say they are "certain to vote Labour", while only 60 per cent of Tories say they are "certain to vote Conservative".

Twice as many Ibibes (29 per cent) as Labour supporters (15 per cent) say "there is a chance that I may change my mind before I vote".

The Liberal Democrats are

the most popular second choice

among potential switchers (28

per cent of wavers name the

Lib-Dems, 17 per cent Labour,

14 per cent Tories).

There remains the puzzle of why ICM consistently put Labour lower, and the Tories and Liberal Democrats higher, than the other polls. Nick Sparrow, ICM managing director, attributes the difference to random telephone interviewing.

But Gallup, which uses the

same method, produces results more in line with the other companies whose interviewers speak to people face-to-face.

Andy Brown, head of research at Gallup, claims his methods are superior to ICM's because telephone numbers are generated at random by computer, while ICM take numbers at random from telephone directories and then add another random number to the last digit.

ICM's method means they get fewer ex-directory numbers, because we know that ex-directory numbers tend to cluster together," Mr Brown said.

He added that, surprisingly, the one-third of the population which is ex-directory is more pro-Labour, reflecting the fact that they tend to be younger, unmarried, in rented housing and less likely to be in professional occupations.

Meanwhile, analysis of the last local council by-elections before the general election by Colin Railings and Michael Thrasher of Plymouth University, suggests a Labour lead of 13 points. This is lower than the opinion polls, but what is heartening for the Tories is that the same analysis just before the general election five years ago put the two main parties neck and neck. If that relationship holds good this time, Labour would win the general election by the same sort of margin at the five point lead in this week's ICM poll, pointing to a Labour majority of around 40 seats.

Harris Research interviewed

1,177 adults face-to-face in their homes between 18 and 21 April.

## Lib Dems beat Tories in the campaign style

John Rentoul

The Liberal Democrats have beaten the Tories into third place when voters are asked which party has "run the most effective campaign so far", according to a MORI opinion poll.

In direct contrast to media commentators' view that Tony Blair has fought an uninspiring and error-prone campaign, 36 per cent of those surveyed said Labour had run the best campaign. Labour was well ahead of the Liberal Democrats on 13 per cent, who pushed the Tories into third place on 11 per cent.

The findings of the poll, carried out on Tuesday this week for the *Times*, are also at odds with the trend in party support in the polls over the five weeks of the campaign so far. Labour's average level of support has fallen slightly from just above 50 per cent when John Major called the election in mid-March to just below 50 per cent now.

But Paddy Ashdown's greater exposure during the campaign seems to have helped lift the Liberal Democrats, who have seen their poll ratings rise over the past five weeks. The average Tory poll rating has also risen slightly during the campaign, despite voters giving Mr Major's campaign a big thumbs-down.

Again contradicting most commentators' who have been impressed with the Prime Minister's bold and personal appeal to the nation, fewer voters are impressed by the Tory campaign

this time than were five years ago. Comparing the figures with those published on 30 March 1992, at the same stage of the last election campaign, suggests that Mr Ashdown is in fact doing worse than last time. In 1992, the Tories came in third on 13 per cent, but the Liberal Democrats were named by 28 per cent, only just behind the 31 per cent naming Neil Kinnock's second and more stilted Labour campaign.

This time, much of the media's attention has been taken by Mr Blair's uncertain start to the campaign. He was reported to be defensive in his *Financial Times* interview with David Dimbleby and the "wobble" over the late change to party policy on privatisation attracted much coverage. Mr Ashdown is generally held to have had a good campaign. When given airtime, he is said to come across exceptionally well and Liberal Democrat policies are popular when people know about them.

Mr Major also impressed journalists with his decision to turn disunity over Europe into an impassioned plea to his party and the country to trust him to negotiate with Britain's European partners.

The other big difference between now and five years ago is that in 1992 only 26 per cent of those interviewed replied "none of them" or "don't know", against 37 per cent now.

Once again, it seems, the "don't knows" have it.

# Ashdown ditches campaign for crusade

Barrie Clement

Ahead of one of the most intensive campaigns conducted by a British politician, Paddy Ashdown last night launched what he described as a crusade for a new politics. Casting aside any suggestion that the electorate might vote tactically to get rid of the Conservatives, Mr Ashdown called on electors to maximise the vote for Liberal Democrats throughout the country.

A vote for his party was a vote for "victory," he told a rally in Edinburgh. Facilely accepting that there was no chance of him entering 10 Downing Street, he made it clear that the victory he had in mind was a "massive force" of Liberal Democrat MPs who would fight for real improvements in education and the health service. While Mr Ashdown's party has picked up support during the hustings, most polls put them three or four per-

centage points behind the 18 per cent vote they attracted in the last general election.

The speech was meant to launch the last seven days of his campaign, during which he will visit 30 constituencies all over the country. Mr Ashdown will once more don his man-of-action mantle in the three days up to polling day, dashing around in a helicopter. Next Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday he will visit more than 20 seats.

Bringing a degree of indignation over suggestions by disillusioned Tory and Labour supporters that a vote for the Liberal Democrats was "wasted," he said the only vote which counted was for policies people believed in.

"If you want better schools, then the only way you will get them is by voting Liberal Democrat. The vote that doesn't count, that won't make the difference, is the Conservative or Labour vote — because they

won't do anything about the cuts, the sacked teachers, the rising classes in our schools."

There was very little to choose between Labour and the Tories — they had the same spending limits, the same tax plans and the same failure to explain how improvements would be paid for. The Liberal Democrats attached price tags to their promises, he said.

"The Labour Party has decided to fight this election on the

awe-inspiring message: New Labour — no difference." Both Tories and Labour made impossible promises of lower taxes and better services, he said, pointing out that they had been in power for 50 years, but neither had made any real difference. "Don't vote for more of the same. Don't be conned into voting from fear, vote for the things you believe in."

He said it was time for more than just a campaign. "Cam-

paigns are short-term. They are about winning votes. Crusades are about beliefs. They are about the long term."

Given that his party had been out of power for half-a-century, Mr Ashdown named Gladstone and Lloyd George as role models for his new policies.

Earlier in the day, Mr Ashdown visited the 1,600-pupil Cockshot Hill comprehensive school in Yardley, a three-way marginal in Birmingham. The

headteacher, David Gentle, showed him a newly built science block which had cost £500,000 but which teachers believed was badly designed.

Mr Gentle said it would have been better designed if the arguments of the school had been taken on board by the local authority. Mr Ashdown believed that his comments vindicated the Liberal Democrats' insistence on a degree of independence in the way schools spent their money.

## The silent revolutionaries



Battle-hardened: Tony Benn in his Chesterfield constituency. "I'm a soldier in the middle of a war. I wouldn't want to discuss my view of the generals" Photograph: David Rose

Kathy Marks

The fax machine in the kitchen of Tony Benn's constituency home whirred into action. "Ah, here come my instructions from Millbank Tower, telling me what to say about everything," he observes. "They get sent to all the candidates twice a day. I file them away very carefully."

Mr Benn already knows what he wants to tell the people of Chesterfield, the Derbyshire market town he has represented since 1984. His election poster declares that he will "consciously works as a committed socialist" for "full employment — a big house-building programme ... a fairer tax system ... trade union rights".

These are not the kind of pledges that are found in the Labour Party manifesto. Then again, Mr Benn has never been noted for being a conformist.

The prophet of the hard left is fighting his seventeenth campaign. He entered Parliament in 1950, when Tony Blair was not yet a twinkle in his father's eye, and has more ministerial experience than any other MP in the Labour ranks.

Now 72, Mr Benn has no plans to retire. One reason is his attachment to Chesterfield, the former mining town that gave him refuge after he lost his Bristol constituency.

He has even been spotted this week wearing a blue rosette

— in support of his local Second Division football team, which made it to the FA Cup semi-final.

There is something to be said for "experience without ambition," he says, puffing on his pipe. "Anyway, there are nine million pensioners and they're entitled to be represented in Parliament."

It must be said that Tony Benn looks fighting fit. He darts around his flat in the grounds of Chesterfield Labour Club, making endless cups of the drink that fuels him from morning to night: tea. "They've

introduced a new pyramid tea bag, have you seen them?" he enthuses. On the wall is a painting of a Yorkshire pit village, a present from Arthur Scargill.

He rails with unflagging energy against his favourite demons: Brussels, the global economy, the profit motive.

The only hint of declining mental agility comes when he tries to recall the country where Kenneth Kaunda was president. "This is what they call a senior moment. It'll come back to me in the night."

This is the man who 18 months ago accused Mr Blair

of trying to destroy socialism. In 1992, he said the Labour Party had lost the election because it was too right wing. But for now, like others on the far left, Mr Benn is keeping his own counsel.

"I'm a soldier in the middle of a war," he says. "If I was putting on my tin hat and getting into the landing craft on D-Day, I wouldn't want to discuss my view of the generals. At the moment, the most important thing is to get rid of a government that has inflicted the most horrific damage on this country."

He cannot, though, avoid the occasional barbed comment. Discussing Edward Heath, he says he respects him because he is consistent. "The people I cannot abide are those who haven't got an opinion until they read the latest Gallup poll." He observes that Nelson Mandela did not succeed "because he had a spin doctor or a new suit".

And, although careful not to predict future party divisions, he warns that a Labour government would face high expectations. "Popular aspirations will surface. It's going to be a hairy time."

Mr Benn says he no longer wants or expects office. "If there are voices to be heard, they're probably better heard with freedom," he adds, ominously. His silence is unlikely to last much beyond 2 May.

## Anti-racist measures promised by Blair

Anthony Bevins  
Political Editor

Tony Blair last night issued a warning that active racists would face a new offence of racial harassment, and a new crime of racially motivated violence under a Labour government.

Interviewed on ZEE TV, the Asian satellite and cable channel, the Labour leader indicated that any government led by him would take tough action against racial attacks.

The Labour manifesto says: "Britain is a multiracial and multicultural society. All its members must have the protection of the law." But Mr Blair was forced to defend the controversial use of a bulldog — a symbol associated with the extreme right British National Party — in one of his party's election broadcasts.

On immigration, Mr Blair said: "There have to be firm controls, but they should be fair."

He rejected a suggestion that Asians were being obstructed in the Labour Party by disputes over membership irregularities and selection procedures.

"I am in favour of encouraging Asian people into the Labour Party. But it's always got to be done on a fair and proper basis," he said. "We stand to increase significantly the number of Asian MPs after the election."

### HOW I WILL VOTE: MARK WIGGLESWORTH

## Searching for a sense of society

**Mark Wigglesworth, conductor, is Music Director of the Premiere Ensemble and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. He has worked with many of the world's leading orchestras including the Berlin Philharmonic and the London Philharmonic.**

**How will you be voting?**  
Liberal Democrat

**Why?**  
Europe is important. I think they are the only party that sees Europe in terms of political cooperation. The other two parties are only interested in selling Europe in terms of how it benefits us as individuals. The whole idea that it could be good for people to work together is never really discussed. The Tories and Labour will sell it to us if they are going to benefit our pockets.

Generally all the policies that the two main parties are selling are based on selfishness. That's very depressing that people should vote based on what is best for them, rather than what is best for the community. The idea that tax is a dirty word is, I think, extraordinary. It benefits everybody to have good services. The amount of extra tax they are talking about is so little for the individual. People might think that they don't benefit from the transport system if they use their car, or they don't benefit from education if they don't have children, but we all benefit if society is strong.

The idea of co-operation and the fact that people may not simply be interested in their own bank accounts is an issue that only the Lib Dems are prepared to lead on. People only think they can make these promises because they will never get elected, but they seem the only party who see politicians as leaders rather than followers. The other parties react to the polls and do whatever people want in order to get elected whereas the Liberal party sticks its neck out in a far more admirable way.

**What do you think of Paddy Ashdown?**  
To be honest I don't think the people are that important: it's the philosophies that matter, and he embodies the philosophy of the party. All the leaders are intelligent people, but it's not so much a question of who they are, as what they believe in. Paddy Ashdown believes in a sense of community, a sense of society and a sense of future, though not just the immediate future.

The issue I feel most strongly about is PR. There are only 100 or so seats where your vote will make a difference, and for everybody else the vote is irrelevant and that is extraordinary. For the vast majority of



people the election is a waste of time, and that can't be right.

**What do you think of tactical voting?**

I'm all for tactical voting. I don't need to do it in my constituency because the Liberals are in second place. But I think Labour is closer to the Liberal party than the Tories. What I'd really like is for neither Labour nor the Tories to get a majority; then PR might become a reality. I think Tony Blair's attitude to PR will be conditioned by his majority. If he has a landslide victory there is no way PR will be high on his agenda. If he needs the Liberals then it probably will be, and I find that depressing because his hand will have been forced, but the outcome is a potentially exciting one.

## ... while Red Ken goes on a Millbank diet



Bread and butter socialist: Ken Livingstone, who is finding new Labour not entirely to his taste. Photograph: Brian Harris

Kim Sengupta

Ken Livingstone was not saying anything much — not just because his mouth was full of masala dosa in the Indian cafe, but because the MP for Brent East is on the Millbank diet.

Apparently, Labour's spin doctors did not want the caustic critic of new Labour to be too voluble during the election campaign. So he is on a vow of silence. For the ever so loquacious former GLC leader, this is akin to a vow of celibacy by Steven Norris.

"In 1992 they told me not to speak for five weeks," said Mr Livingstone. "This time no orders have arrived from Millbank. They don't directly send me any memos any longer, because I would tell them to sod off. But I am not going to say anything now, I don't want to be blamed if things go wrong. I may have plenty to say come May 2."

So though we have conducted an interview with him, it was entirely off the record. Here is how New Labour likes Ken to be quoted. What about his views on the leadership? He was hardly complimentary:

"he said. He could scarcely hide his amusement as he continued:

"before adding: "And that's what comes of too much spin doctoring." But what about the grip of the spin doctors on the campaign? At an earlier lunch, Mr Livingstone's friend

described the reaction he got whenever he walked into Millbank: "

Waving a glass of sambusa he smiled. "The only things missing were the strings of garlic and the crucifix."

Mr Livingstone's public reticence on new Labour has excited his Tory opponent Mark Francois. "He has new Labour on his campaign leaflets, but we all know what he feels about

Tony Blair, he has been less than complimentary in the past. Does he really believe in the policies of new Labour? I doubt it." Mr Francois was a councillor at the home of Essex Man, Basildon, for four years. He was

THE INDEPENDENT  
election '97

# Labour wants sports gold

Fran Abrams  
Political Correspondent

Labour has come up with the ultimate election promise - Britain would bring home Olympic gold under a Blair government, the party's heritage spokesman said yesterday.

"Within a decade we could see Britain back where it should be - among the top 10 in the Olympics. I'm not saying number one or number two, but at least in the top 10, the place that we used to hold some time ago," Jack Cunningham said.

He was pinned down to a specific pledge by Tom McNab, the

British Olympic coach, at the launch of Labour's sporting plans. Mr McNab had gone along with a bevy of other sporting stars, to support the party's plans.

Acknowledging that things, to coin a phrase from Labour's campaign song, could only get better for Britain's sportsmen and women, Mr Cunningham blamed the Conservatives.

"We have examined the reasons why. We are not short of talent. We can fairly point the finger at the failure of the Tory government to nurture sporting achievement," he said.

Labour, he went on, would

put Britain back in the world sports superleague. Furthermore, it would fight to bring the World Cup and other major international events to Britain.

Among the guests at the launch was the runner Brendan Foster, who won numerous medals under the last Labour government including the gold in the 10,000 metres at the 1978 Commonwealth Games.

Mr Foster was joined by Tes

sa Sanderson, who threw the javelin at five Olympics and won gold at Los Angeles in 1984. Also present were Shaun Edwards, former captain of the Great Britain rugby league

team, Brian Moore, former England rugby union player and Judy Oakes, the international shot-putter.

Ms Sanderson said afterwards that she had voted Conservative at the last election but that she would be supporting Labour this time.

"Britain is very talented at sport. There are a lot of kids out there at grassroots who aren't getting the opportunities and I think Labour will try to do that," she said.

Labour has promised a range of measures, from a new emphasis on children's play to a new youth sports unit in the De-

partment of National Heritage.

In a new document, Labour's *Sporting Nation*, the party called yesterday for an end to the sale of school playing fields, a more strategic approach to grants for sport, a better British Academy of Sport than the one offered by the Conservatives and a task-force for football.

Iain Spratt, the sports minister, was not impressed.

"Himmy enough they said nothing about these issues until after we announced our comprehensive plans. It is time for sports fans up and down the country to show Labour the red card," he said.



by Anonymous

**D**ominic 7. Nipper was explaining the Mawhiney Bounce to Auntie; about how you take a low grade story (in this case an ancient leak) and use it to bounce your opponent's good news stories off the evening bulletins. To do it successfully, he told her, you needed total shamelessness; a shamelessness that he didn't entirely deserve.

Actually Auntie understood it all perfectly well, but she indulged the boy, sensing that he needed to talk. Waiting for the big event of the day to start - and with the moment of decision so close - all of them lived from minute to minute, poll to poll. By this hour, seven days from now, several million voters from Stirling to the Scillies would already have made their decisions.

*Out of habit she took yet another look at the gathering piranhas. Placing themselves in a fleshly wedge at the side and centre of the hall were the TV bigwigs, the guys whose reputations within their industries rested upon their performance in these few weeks.*

The largest and most influential of them she had dubbed "Uncle Herbert", after her mother's brother. That Herbert - when attending family get-togethers - had cultivated the habit of taking up the whole of a very large sofa, his padded thighs wide apart, jovially rebuking his relatives in very loud voice.

*Yesterday this Uncle Herbert had taken up an extra minute of everyone's time by correcting the second page of a party press release, one that had been written by a harassed Prodigy very late at night.*

*"I was under the impression," he had said, his voice redolent with ponderous humour, "that 'Achilles' was spelled with a capital 'A', and - the last time I looked - 'he' had two 'e's."*

*"So does 'arsehole'". Big Al had whispered in her ear.*

*And there was the frizzy-haired assistant editor of the major establishment newspaper, a woman used - since earliest childhood - to being told (correctly) how brilliant she was. In press conferences this confidence exhibited itself in publicly pointing out interesting things that she had noticed to her colleagues, and to the politicians.*

*Auntie turned away from Nipper. A jovial Brown was introducing a list of eminent switchers (some of whom she had actually heard of) who were now enthusiastically endorsing the Candidate.*

*Then there was the filmed message from the rough diamond entrepreneur, whose*

*videoed lips told the assembly that he liked the Candidate because "he was really up for it, aggressive, longing for it."*

*He certainly was. When he entered and walked through the middle of the room she realised she was witnessing the transformation of the man that she had known from politician to celebrity; a celebrity who - once the campaign was over - she might never know again.*

*Once in government qualities other than loyalty and friendship would be needed. This knew.*

*Auntie watched him shun the microphone, and stand as close as possible to his audience - speaking fluently without notes about his vision of Britain. She loathed adulation, but he was now a complete star: young, handsome, keen and honest.*

*Had Lord Lloyd Webber defected, she could easily imagine specially composed music swelling.*

*On the posterless streets of mile after mile of sullen suburbs there was nothing but the billboards. Behind these blank doors and windows were the millions who would soon decide whether the Candidate would be able to offer his country anything other than his resignation. What the hell were they thinking?*

*At seven she was back at HQ to collect her coat and bag before escorting the Candidate to the TV studios for his latest big performance. On her way out she passed by a TV screen showing the familiar bars of an opinion poll graphic. This one gave her party 63%, the Grey Man's 27% and the Marine 2% - a lead of 36%. Was she dreaming?*

*"Take no notice," said a small voice, "it's only Sky's just a bit of fun' phone-in poll. It's funny, but we still don't really know what's going on out there."*



Family matters: The Goldsmith clan, Sir James, Annabel carrying Sulaiman and Jemima, on the campaign trail yesterday. Photograph: Brian Harris

Clare Garner

Maybe Sulaiman was trying to say something. First dad. Now granddad. All of a sudden, Sulaiman - who has spent the first five months of his life canvassing door-to-door - was physically sick.

His mother, Jemima Goldsmith, mopped up the mess from her chocolate-coloured velvet sleeves. To her it was baby business as usual, but to the entourage of Referendum Party stage managers, it was an interruption for which they were ill-prepared.

While yesterday's stroll on the edge of Putney Heath may not have been quite what Sulaiman had had in mind when his mother tucked him up in his Baby Gap gear, he has little choice.

Jemima explained: "I can't really leave him behind. I haven't got anyone to leave

## Family outing to sell grandad's message

him with," no doubt striking a chord with many a single mother.

Mother and son were out campaigning with Sir James, who is fighting Putney, and David Mellor on his referendum crusade.

Sulaiman has been on the political beat since "day one."

He is, according to Jemima, "remarkably unfazed" about being hauled around the houses. "I think he enjoys it," she said. "I think he gets bored now sitting in a nursery."

The electioneering in Pakistan was certainly good practice for Sulaiman, who even

knew how to handle the men with long lenses. "Can you look to your right, please," yelled a snapper as the family posed for the press. The youngest subject was first to obey his orders.

Jemima continued: "This is a bit public for me. I'd prefer to go on my own, door to door with a pram ... actually, it's difficult to talk to people when there are press around."

Whether or not it was down to the presence of the press, Jemima spoke far more passionately about her son than the Referendum Party yesterday.

"He goes everywhere with

me," she said, adjusting her veil and his hood simultaneously. "He's attached to me. He's a good boy, really. He's so easy. He's portable."

And when asked whether having Sulaiman on board helped to break the ice on doorsteps, she admitted: "It helps me, I don't know whether it helps other people."

Jemima was determined, however, to appear more than a mere puppet on daddy's string.

Challenged on whether she, herself, held strong views on Europe, she replied: "Of course I

do. Why do you think I'm here? It's not just because I'm your father's daughter that I'm doing this. I've got more convictions than that."

Unlike some other people she could name: "The biggest crime is the politicians changing their views minutes before the election."

While her canvassing practice in Pakistan seemed to come in handy, Jemima refused to be drawn into making parallels between canvassing with her husband and her father.

"It's a separate campaign," she insisted.

But the Mellor camp was quick to proffer a parallel. A spokeswoman at the campaign office said there was no point in panicking about Jemima's presence in Putney. "We don't see it as a threat," she said.

"She (Jemima) did it for her husband - and it didn't do him much good."

## Refusenik loses fight for the right not to vote

Fran Abrams

Political Correspondent

It is a quintessentially English dispute. In one corner, a determined home counties non-voter who, disillusioned with politics, demands that his name be removed from the electoral register. In the other, the forces of bureaucracy. They refuse doggedly to comply - solely, it appears, because they do not believe they have to.

The issue has given rise to an extraordinary 15-month correspondence between our hero, who wishes to remain anonymous, and the authorities.

This electoral refusenik, who lives in Hampshire, has no wish to evade taxation or to break the law. He merely wishes formally to renounce his right to vote. The nub of his problem is that while it is not unlawful not to

appear on the register, it is unlawful not to fill in the registration form. And filling in the form leads, inexorably, to appearance on the register.

His first foray into the narrow world of local electoral bureaucracy took place in November 1995. He had been on the roll since the 1990s, but now his anger at what he describes as "a bizarre and lugubrious search for political leadership ... among the floating voters" got the better of him. He asked to be removed from the draft electoral register.

The request brought a swift but predictable response from a junior council official. Householders were required to fill in their details on "Form A", it said. These details could be placed on a register of "other electors", if there was a good case for suppressing them.

The refusenik tried again: "Dear Sir. Not good enough. I shall take the matter further through the Parliamentary

ombudsman. Yours faithfully."

As he had already filled in the form, Mr No was not impressed. "With the greatest respect, your letter seems to miss the point," he replied. "Can we now move on to more profitable ground?"

"I formally abrogate my voting rights and do not wish to be a voter ... This does not mean that I do not want to vote but rather that I do not even wish to be associated with the constituency of voters. I am terminating all association with the body politic and refuse to appear as any form of elector."

The reply was curt: "Thank you for your letter ... I have retained your name on the Register of Electors as required by Law. Yours faithfully."

The refusenik tried again: "Dear Sir. Not good enough. I shall take the matter further through the Parliamentary

solicitor, but still little progress. It was now October 1996. He should wait for the new draft register to appear in November and then object, it suggested. And so, again, he did. On 7 December. Then he waited for a reply. And waited.

The reply was longer, but no more helpful. The Parliamentary ombudsman could not help, it said. Try the Local Government Ombudsman.

And so, again, he did. Again. A lengthy reply, this time from an "investigator". Again, no joy. The Local Government Ombudsman, it said, could not help. No injustice had been taken place that would justify an investigation.

This time the refusenik took to the telephone.

His call to the district council drew a response from its

the Ombudsman," it said. To add insult to injury, it suggested he wait until the 1997 draft register appeared in November.

The refusenik's reply last weekend was more in sorrow than in anger: "Let me ask you a simple question - it is rhetorical, I do not crave a reply, only silent reflection," he began. "Is the act of *not* voting a clear and unequivocal proof of the elector's rejection of the election?"

If so, how did the solicitor feel about the fact that between 70 and 80 per cent of voters did not turn out at local elections? Was he apprehensive? Or did he, like the politicians, not really care?

"You have successfully frustrated me," he concluded. "Justice delayed is justice denied."

THIS SATURDAY IN THE MAGAZINE



THE SOUL OF THE PARTY

Photographer David Modell has spent two years on the trail of the Tories. His pictures capture the temper of the Party as it approaches another

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## Ashdown stumped by question of men-only list of new peers

Anthony Bevins

Political Editor

Paddy Ashdown was stumped yesterday by the contrast between his call for a fair deal for women and his own decision to nominate three men for life peerages in last week's honours list.

Opening an election press conference on the party's policies to help women at work and home, the Liberal Democrat leader said: "There could be no greater symbol of the need to change the male-dominated House of Commons in that in the Commons we have a shoot-

were all people who had given long and distinguished service to the party.

The press conference theme was designed to coincide with National Take Our Daughters to Work Day - a scheme to provide young girls with an idea of the world of work.

Diana Maddock, the party spokeswoman on women and family policy, said: "Over 11 million women will go to work to day. They will be joined at work by thousands of teenage girls observing their mums and dads at work."

"Sadly, too often, they will see

long hours, low pay and poor maternity rights. These 'glass ceilings' must be shattered."

She said that the party's policy for women at home would offer an acceleration of the equitable splitting of pensions on divorce, the introduction of a career's benefit, and improvement in the availability of refuge places for women fleeing from violent partners.

For women at work, the party promised free pre-school places for all three- and four-year-olds, encouragement of more child-care provision by extending tax relief, and an extension of employment and

Middle  
Michael Streeter

# Middle England swayed by rootless tree

**Michael Streeter**  
finds Redditch influenced by Tories' broadcast attack on Labour

A perceived failure of the Labour Party to set the election campaign alight is influencing some disillusioned Conservatives to vote Tory again, according to *The Independent's* group of voters in a key marginal seat.

Some of the Redditch group – all former Conservative voters – regard John Major as conducting a more effective campaign and there are indications that the recent party election broadcast depicting new Labour as a "rootless tree" has struck a chord.

Promisingly for Tony Blair, his party's pledge to raise £1bn for the health services from the midweek lottery has been favourably received. But more ominously for him, there are signs that the state of the economy, and its prospects under a change of government, are playing more and more in the minds of so-called Mondeo Man across middle England.

The common ground between local Tory and Labour campaigners that the result in the Hereford and Worcester seat – where Labour needs a swing of just over 3 per cent to win – may be closer than indicated by national polls is also born out by the group's views. Among the undecided there is admiration for the Liberal Democrat policies, but a stronger slide towards staying with the Tories rather than trusting the uncertainty of a Labour government.

Steven Marriott, 28, had wanted to vote Labour for the first time but will now support the Tories. "The campaign has disappointed me, it's like they say a Punch and Judy show. I thought the parties were going to sell themselves but they're just bickering. I expected Tony Blair would have something to say." He is concerned about tax rises but has seen nothing from new Labour to inspire him.

Roger Jones, 42, an invoice manager, remains undecided but was swayed by the rootless tree broadcast. "I thought that was a vote getter and for me a real eye opener. It brought home that Labour change their policies all the time." He is waiting to see if Mr Blair can produce new policy initiative.

Another group member, Bri-



Fuel stop: A man concentrating on his food yesterday in the key marginal seat of Redditch

Photograph: Brian Harris

an Nicholls, 60, a butcher, has been more confused than enlightened so far. "The campaign has been very negative and more about one-upmanship." He had considered voting Labour but believes he will stick with "what I know" on the issues that matter most, trust and the economy, again citing the rootless tree broadcast.

The economy also concerned Lionel Baird, 52, a paramedic who had been determined to vote for Mr Blair but has switched back to Mr Major. "I'm looking to retire in five or six years and I'm really starting to think about what will happen to my investments. It all depends on growth and will that slow down under Labour? I'm worried they might think they won't get in again and so try to do too much too quickly and muck it up."

However, toolmaker Andrew

Osciaik, 45, who had wobbled over his new-found support for Labour, is now concerned about the Tory divisions over Europe. "They are split while Labour seem stronger and united."

He remains unconvinced by the campaign but has a different view of the economy from other group members. "John Major talks about a boom but there is no boom in Redditch. They say unemployment is falling but in Redditch there are more and more people in part-time jobs, they're constantly on the move yet they are classed as fully employed. I've been made redundant three times in the last few years. I don't agree that we can't do any better."

Susan Lovett, 38, a former sales consultant, was impressed by Labour's new lottery policy though she will still vote Tory. "It's a very clever move. A lot of

people, including myself have always thought that the money should go to education or health rather than to the Churchill papers or the Royal Opera House." Increasingly, her concern is for

things, it should be the government. Locally he feels the Tories have offered nothing and is worried about the state of hospitals as well as the economy. But ultimately he will vote Tory again. "I do think it's about the right men for the job."

Cold-store operator Alan Thomas, 35, agrees. "I suppose it's just a gut feeling. I started to think more about the election and I believe that John Major is still the right man for the job. I trust him to make the right decision for the country, for example over the single currency."

Like many in the group he wants trade with the rest of Europe but is wary about more integration. Yet their general view concurred with the findings of Labour canvassers in Redditch that Europe interests voters, but is too confusing to be a determining factor.

With one week of the campaign to go Mark Redfearn, 29, an engineer, feels more unsure than ever about who to support and will probably sit down this weekend to decide. One of the narrow majority in the group of 13 who had initially decided to switch to Labour – only two are now "definite," suggesting a modest Labour win in Redditch. – Mr Redfearn is unhappy with the party's "negative" campaign. "I saw the broadcast where they played 'Land of Hope and Glory' and it was rubbish. All they did was talk about the bad things not what they are going to do."

"I had made up my mind that I would never vote Conservative again and that I would vote Labour. But now I'm not so sure. Tony Blair has let me down a bit, cannot face issues and he skirts around them. I'm 50-50 at the moment."

\*Survey undertaken by NOP Market Research among 1,000 randomly selected bank customers. Interviews were conducted by telephone between 20 Nov 1996 and 12 Dec 1996. Enquiries must be aged 16 or over. In order to safeguard our customers, certain transactions may require written confirmation. First Direct reserves the right to decline to open an account for you. First Direct credit facilities are subject to status. For written details of our services write to First Direct, Freepost, Leeds LS98 2RF. First Direct variable interest rate for overdrafts up to £250 is 12.6% EAR. All information based on authorised overdrafts of 5 days or more per month and correct at 11 March 1997. Member HSBC Group

# Lang in row over Scottish job fears

**Stephen Goodwin**

Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade, was accused of "juvenile scaremongering" yesterday after he contradicted the boss of Scotland's second largest insurance company on the firm's attitude to devolution.

The Conservatives are rattled by an apparent change of heart by both Scottish Widows and Standard Life, from coded warnings of job losses north of the border at the time of the 1992 election to one of business as usual under home rule.

Mike Ross, the chief executive of Scottish Widows which manages funds worth £24bn, has at least twice this year expressed a relaxed attitude to a Scottish parliament.

In March he said in a radio broadcast: "I don't see any particular threats in the winds, for example, from devolution. And on Wednesday the Scotsman newspaper reported Mr Ross as being "happy" with what he knew of Labour's proposals.

But Mr Ross insisted Scottish Widows were "against" devolution. A senior executive at the insurance company, who he repeatedly refused to identify, had told him the company "did not feel comfortable with the proposition".

"I have spoken to a senior executive at the Scottish Widows Fund and it is quite clear that the fund is extremely unhappy about the prospect of constitutional change and the other proposals of the Labour Party," Mr Lang said.

In a deflating response, Mr Ross reiterated Scottish Widows' neutral stance. The company's overriding concern was to protect the interests of policy holders and it was "vital" that under any constitutional

arrangements there should be fiscal and regulatory cohesion across the UK for insurance, he said.

In common with any other business, Scottish Widows preferred to have as few changes to contend with as possible, but, Mr Ross concluded: "On the issue of devolution, we neither back it nor oppose it."

In 1992 Standard Life, Scotland's largest insurance company managing funds of totalling some £50bn, and Scottish Widows were accused of trying to influence employees after indicating that some operations might be moved to England if there was home rule.

George Robertson, the shadow Scottish secretary, said Mr Lang should "put up or shut up. If he cannot name his sources he should not indulge in this rather juvenile scaremongering".

It was clear that the more companies learnt about Labour's devolution proposals the more comfortable they were with them. Mr Robertson said: "If one compares what Standard Life and Scottish Widows were saying at the last election on the record to what they are saying now, it is nothing less than a sea change in opinion."

Widening the charge to industry in general, Mr Lang said Labour's policies would destroy Scotland's reputation as an investment centre. In 1995-96 Scotland had attracted a record £1bn worth of investment and over 1,000 jobs a month had been created or safeguarded. "Within weeks" of a Labour victory, this flow would dry up, he said. But when pressed to name a single company that had told him it would leave Scotland or not invest if Labour devolved power to Edinburgh, he was unable or unwilling to do so.

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14 international

# French left goes in search of a new ideology

Like Blair's Labour, the Socialists have moved right, writes John Lichfield

Paris — It is nearly half a century since Britain and France drove together, politically speaking, on the left side of the road. The last time Paris and London both had Socialist leaders was in 1951 (President Vincent Auriol and Prime Minister Clement Attlee).

Over the next five weeks, it is just possible that left-leaning governments will be elected at both ends of the Channel tunnel. (Near simultaneous, neighbouring elections are also unusual: 1974 was the last time it happened.)

The coincidence of polls

may be of no consequence to Tony Blair; but it is proving an embarrassment to the French Socialist leader, Lionel Jospin. Mr Jospin, 59, has been suffering unhelpful, and often unfair, comparisons with Mr Blair for months. They have become thick and fast since the snap French parliamentary election was announced by President Jacques Chirac on Monday.

"It seems to me that the British Labour party has had its cultural revolution, but not the French Socialists," said the former centre-right prime minis-

ter, Edouard Balladur. "Mr Jospin is still talking and thinking in the outdated concepts of state intervention which failed in the early 1980s."

There is some truth in this.

Mr Jospin, after a good performance and honourable defeat in the 1995 presidential election, has failed to give the French Socialists a new post-Mitterrand mission or gloss. But British-French comparisons are also misleading.

Mr Blair's task was to bury the image of a statist, welfare Labour Party, controlled by unions and special interests.

Mr Jospin's problem is, in a

sense, the opposite. They had already become centrist, not by design but by drift.

Mr Jospin and his colleagues criticise the failings of the state-shrinking reforms undertaken

attempted half-heartedly under Socialist governments in the 1980s.

Should the Socialists turn left again, as the radical wing of the party demands? Or try to

claim the centre, by painting the Juppé government as slacking to the right? So far, Mr Jospin has tried to do both:

presenting himself as the kinder, gentler alternative to a painful set of reforms which he does not dare wholly to repudiate.

Having little coherent to defend, Mr Jospin and his colleagues have decided to attack. They plan to make the election a referendum on the personal popularity of the man who engineered it — François Mitterrand, Mr Juppé, still one of the most disliked politicians in France. They accuse Mr Juppé of wanting to lead France down the Thatcher-Reagan road to heartless economic liberalisation.

More risky, they have begun to make an electoral issue of sleaze — specifically the many and tangled, financial scandals bubbling away in the governing centre-right parties.

The problem with this approach is that similar, financial scandals involving Socialist and allied politicians in the Mitterrand years are still fresh in the minds of the public.

Although aggression can buy them a few days, it is clear that the early election has caught the Socialists, the main opposition party, in logistical and ideological confusion.

This was precisely what Mr Juppé had intended when he persuaded President Chirac to call the election nine months early. Being able to compare Mr Jospin to the ideologically-speaking, well-behaved boy next door is a useful bonus.

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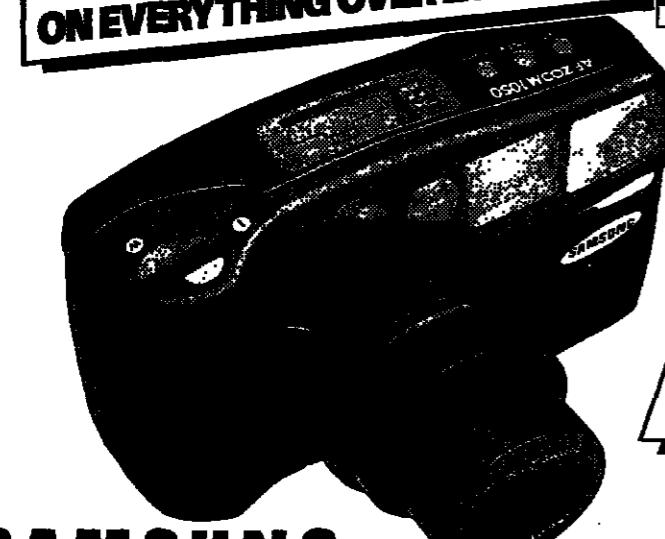
Common cause: Left-winger Lionel Jospin, centre, who could soon be leading France with Tony Blair in power in Britain. The last time Paris and London both had left-leaning leaders was in 1951, with French President Vincent Auriol, far left, and Labour Prime Minister Clement Attlee, left.



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## Le Pen leaves door open to election role

John Lichfield

There was a notable absentee from the impressively long list of National Front candidates for the French election presented by Jean-Marie Le Pen yesterday. The absentee was Le Chef, or Le Béte (the beast) as he likes to call himself. Jean-Marie Le Pen himself.

The leader of the far-right FN said that he might still run in the snap parliamentary election called for 25 May and 1 June. He would make the announcement when "the time was right".

Le Pen boasted that, if requested to do so, the "quasi-totality" of the FN candidates would be "delighted" to stand down and surrender their constituencies for him. The "quasi-totality", please note, is not the totality.

There are two reasons for Mr Le Pen's unaccustomed shyness. First, he knows that the other parties will mobilise all their heaviest weaponry against him as soon as they know where he is standing.

Second, Mr Le Pen is reluctant to stand at all. His closest advisers have warned him that it would be seriously damaging if he ran and lost, while his *de facto* Number Two, the rising power in the FN, Bruno Mégrét, ran and won.

Mégrét, as expected, will be the FN candidate in Vitrolles-Mariemont, the constituency north of Marseille which included the town where his wife, Catherine, won a pivotal mayoral election in February. This seat, nurtured by Mr Mégrét for years, is the one near-certain FN gain in next month's election. Mr Mégrét, it can be assumed, is the one FN candidate who would *not* be delighted to give up his seat to his boss.

A simultaneous Mégrét victory and a Le Pen defeat in the parliamentary election would be a desperate blow to the *amour propre* of Le Béte. It would also

consolidate Mr Mégrét's claim to be the future leader of the party — the man capable of making the FN respectable to wavering voters who dislike the vulgarity and intermittently overt extremism of Le Pen.

The FN leader's difficulties point to the continuing electoral and strategic weaknesses of Lepenism, despite the victory in Vitrolles and its colonisation of a large part of the French working class.

The Front is running at about 13 to 15 per cent in opinion polls: this would be a historical



high for the FN in a parliamentary election.

It would be enough to put over 100 (Mr Le Pen predicts 200) FN candidates into the second round of voting on 1 June. It would bring about scores of awkward three-way second-round contests, which might prevent the centre-right parties now in government from achieving another majority.

But, unless the polls are substantially undercounting FN support, as they sometimes do, it would not give Le Pen more than a couple of seats. Le Chef said yesterday that his target was 10 seats. Political analysts say he will be lucky to gain more than one: Mr Mégrét's in Vitrolles.



**Global strategy:** Experts warn of new weapons and policies

## Power-nations look away as crises loom

Christopher Bellamy

Defence Correspondent

A pervasive and persistent parochialism has dogged the foreign and security policies of the main players on the world stage over the past year, according to the authoritative London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies.

A brief post-Cold War sense of humanitarian obligation to try to solve the world's problems has begun to give way to colder *realpolitik* calculations of what can be done. In future, "coalitions of the ready and willing will only be made up of the relevant and affected."

In its annual *Strategic Survey*, published yesterday, the institute noted, with concern, that national elections in France, Israel, Japan, Russia, Taiwan and the US all interfered with clear foreign policy choices during 1996. In 1997, the same thing happened in Britain.

"In their search for votes, or for support, leaders trying for the top position adjusted their policies to reflect what they thought their constituents wanted. Almost inevitably, this did not include foreign issues."

Institute Director John Chipman, launching this year's Sur-

vey, said that in spite of efforts to organise common foreign and security policies, western countries are reverting to a position where they will act only when they see a clear interest that can be explained domestically.

For western countries the absence of an obvious external

threat reinforces their introverted tendencies.

While US provincialism has a long tradition, the survey says, European parochialism took on a new mantle in 1996. The Institute concludes that "while the 'under construction' signs were up, the Europeans barely lifted their gaze above their own ramparts."

With Europe dragging its feet the onus was, as ever, on the US to lead in world affairs.

But the US, again, saw everything through domestic lenses, delaying the admission there would be a follow-on force in Bosnia and attacking soft targets close to home like companies which tried to do business with Cuba.

Russia, too, saw things through domestic eyes – particularly the key issue of Nato enlargement which was used much as Britain's political parties used that of Europe, as a tool for domestic political confrontation.

The events of 1996 overwhelmingly showed, the institute concludes, "that no state, including the US was immune from foreign meddling in domestic affairs or domestic meddling in foreign affairs. The distinction between foreign and domestic is becoming thin and the net result is more incoherence".

In Russia, the institute notes a decline in industrial production, a deteriorating military, and a profound criminalisation of politics and economics. Yet the institute is surprisingly optimistic. "This is not a time of troubles in the classic sense ... there is no tyrant waiting in the wings, nor could one impose himself on a population that is now half-free."

Dr Chipman said China was an "assertive" power, rather than a directly threatening one.

"China veers from excessive confidence to paranoia about its ability to prosper free of foreign constraint. The debate about how to handle China has become one of the central issues in international relations."

The survey identifies an "arc of conflict and crisis" in Africa, illustrated as running from the Red Sea through southeast Sudan, across the whole of Rwanda and Burundi and most of Zaire, and embracing the northern part of Angola.

The survey says the international community is gradually, but significantly, disengaging from Africa.

"The test of whether the West can maintain its indifference will come if Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko is deposed and the country collapses. Should the West allow it to descend into chaos without attempting to shore up a reasonable, unifying government, there will be little hope for any other African country facing an uncertain future."

■ *Strategic Survey 1996/97*, (Oxford University press for the ISS, London, 1997), £25/\$39.

**● The events of 1996 showed that no state ... is immune from foreign meddling ■**

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Institute Director John Chipman, launching this year's Sur-

vey that terrorists like the Aum Shinri Kyo cult in Japan, which used nerve gas in the Tokyo underground, might turn to these horrific bugs, which can be grown as easily as brewing home-made beer.

"Preventing determined proliferators acquiring biological and toxic agents appears to be virtually impossible," the IISS concludes. Whereas large-scale attacks are unlikely in the near future, it says, "these barriers are crumbling and the revolutionary advances in biotechnology will probably remove them altogether in the first decade of the 21st century".

Biological weapons use micro-

organisms – either bacteria or viruses – or toxins which, although biological in origin, behave more like deadly chemicals. Weight for weight, biological warfare agents can be hundreds or thousands of times more potent than chemicals, and can cause a variety of symptoms.

Aum Shinri Kyo experimented with anthrax, which causes breathing difficulties, exhaustion, toxæmia and cyanosis and kills in 95 to 100 per cent of cases but, fortunately, their experiments affected no one. Anthrax is probably the deadliest biological agent; others which have been developed are tularemia

(deadly in 30 to 40 per cent of cases), botulism and bubonic plague.

Despite continuing inspections by the United Nations, it suspects that Iraq continues to retain biological weapons. The IISS report says inspectors found Iraq had developed biological rocket warheads.

Although the design was crude – each rocket carried about eight litres of liquid anthrax spores or botulinum – one rocket could contaminate several square kilometres. Iraq also developed biological fillings for 155mm artillery shells and aircraft bombs, and had come close to developing spray tanks.

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# Anzacs declare war on the Dirty Digger

**Robert Milliken**  
Sydney

As Australians mark Anzac Day, Rupert Murdoch is under fire for his commercial exploitation of one of the most sacred days in the Australian calendar, when the country commemorates its war dead.

Veterans and their families have accused Mr Murdoch of "corporate vandalism" over his use of military symbols to promote an Anzac Test between Australian and New Zealand rugby league teams in Sydney today. The game will be staged by Superleague, the rugby league enterprise that Mr Murdoch has created for his Australian pay-television venture.

Anzac Day is a public holiday in which Australians and New Zealanders mark the anniversary of the disastrous Gallipoli landings of the First World War on 25 April 1915, and remember them dead in other wars. As the numbers of returned soldiers, or "Diggers", have dwindled over the years, Anzac Day marches and ceremonies have swelled as their descendants have stepped into their shoes.

For 81 years, since the first Anzac Day in 1916, solemnity and commercial-free have been

the watchwords. Enter Mr Murdoch, sometimes known as the "Dirty Digger" over his tabloid newspapers. Superleague recently struck a deal with the New South Wales branch of the Returned Services League (RSL), the veterans' organisation. In return for using the word "Anzac" in connection with the Australia-New Zealand match today, using the Army's rising-sun symbol on players' uniforms and offering a trophy in the shape of the Australian army slouch hat, Superleague would donate A\$20,000 (£10,000) towards walkway at the Sydney war memorial that the RSL is building to commemorate soldiers who died in New Guinea in the Second World War.

When the deal was revealed, John Ribot, chief executive of Superleague, deflected the resulting flak by denying that the Murdoch organisation had bought the Anzac legend for commercial gain. "We're enhancing it," he said. "We're creating a young audience."

But many old soldiers are outraged. Alf Garland, a retired brigadier and former RSL president, attacked the Test's television promotion, which compares football teams to soldiers in battle. "I don't think these people should be using

Patriot games: The use of the Anzac name by Murdoch (inset) to promote the Rugby League test clash between Australia and New Zealand today has for many cheapened the memory of those who fought and died at Gallipoli, below right

Main photograph: David Ashdown

Anzac as a commercial proposition," he said. "I'll be going to the dawn service and remembering the people I served with who never came back. That's what it should be."

While the Anzacs were attacking him, Mr Murdoch was being challenged on a second front by opponents of his plan to turn another Australian public icon, the Sydney Showgrounds, into a studio and film theme park for Twentieth Century Fox, the Hollywood studio he owns. Opponents of the deal yesterday took it to court in Sydney. They are led by Sinclair Hill, a prominent, wealthy

Australian farmer and a friend of the Prince of Wales, whom he once taught polo. Mr Hill last week paid almost A\$40,000 for a full-page advertisement in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, a non-Murdoch paper, in the form of an open letter to the magnate.

"The 71 acres of the showgrounds are a national treasure," Mr Hill wrote. "Every Australian hates your Fox destruction of our heritage and history. Destruction of our soul."

Mr Hill then appealed to Mr Murdoch to build his studio elsewhere: "There is no greater

Australian than you, Rupert, and I again ask you to make one of the truly great decisions of your life, a Murdoch contribution to Australia. FULL THE PIN."

Mr Hill's open letter followed a direct plea to Mr Murdoch in a 15-minute telephone conversation between the two men several weeks earlier.

As he prepared to go to the New South Wales Court of Appeal yesterday, Mr Hill said: "I was born with a silver spoon, and part of my responsibility is to help the whole cultural betterment of the country. This showground land is part of the entanglement of people and history. I want Murdoch to leave it behind as a public park that we could build into the spirit of an Australian republic, which he supports."

I'm a republican too. I hope Prince Charles comes out here and helps us become a republic. He's a big man, a fine hu-

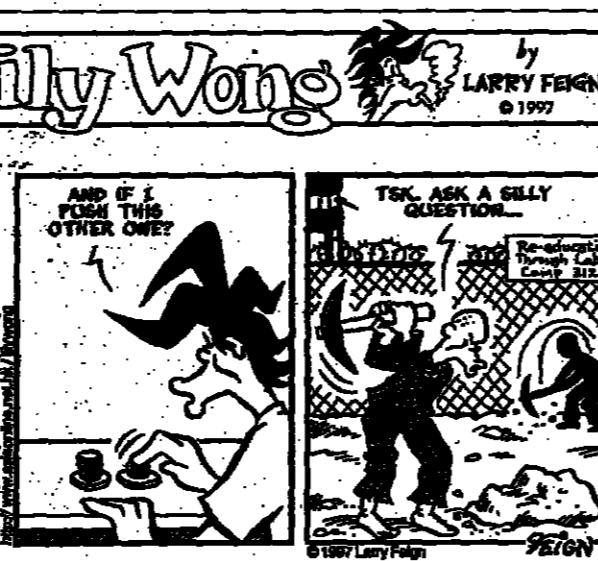
man being. I will suggest to Prince Charles that he come here and help us become a republic."

The showgrounds, public land since 1811, were offered to Mr Murdoch by Australia's former Labor government in a deal that it hoped would secure support from the Murdoch press at

last year's general election.

After Mr Murdoch secured the right to build the studio, his partners failed to support Labor and its leader, Paul Keating, who lost in a landslide.

And what was Mr Murdoch's response to Mr Hill's phone call? "He said 'I will think about it,'" said Mr Hill.



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## Greco-Turkish relations show a thaw

**Tony Barber**  
Europe Editor

To the untrained eye, the steps Greece and Turkey are taking towards improving ties are so small as to be almost imperceptible. Yet the Greek-Turkish relationship has been paralysed by hostility and mistrust for so long that any movement seems a change for the better.

Greek Deputy Foreign Minister Georgios Papandreu, and his Turkish counterpart, Orhan Ceymen, agreed at a meeting in Malta last week to set up a committee of independent experts from both countries to discuss how to improve relations.

Despite stressing that the experts would not represent their governments and that no one should expect "immediate and sweeping results", Mr Papandreu pronounced himself satisfied that this was the right way forward for the two countries.

But the process is likely to be slow because Greece does not anticipate any face-to-face meetings between the experts. Instead they intend to communicate indirectly, through the European Union's Dutch presidency. Moreover, Greece has been at pains to underline that the experts' talks will not even constitute a "dialogue", a word which in diplomatic parlance implies something friendly and official. Rather, they will focus on "procedural issues relating to Greek-Turkish disputes".

Of these there are plenty, ranging from the Cyprus conflict to arguments over territorial waters, islands, airspace and mineral rights in the Aegean Sea.

In what looks like a conciliatory gesture ahead of the talks, Greece has postponed military flights in Greek Cypriot airspace and has put off a joint exercise with the Greek Cypriot national guard. But the small initiatives towards Turkey have proved too much for reticents in Greece's ruling Pasok party. Thirty-two members of parliament are opposed to almost any form of talks with Turkey and similar intransigence is felt in Turkey, too.

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The illusion of a figure that had defied time: design by Louis for a gown for Marlene Dietrich, using flesh-coloured chiffon

Reg Gammon was born in the year Gauguin began painting the belles and natural beauty of an unspoilt Tahiti: 103 years ago.

References to his longevity amused but never annoyed Gammon. He rather enjoyed the fact that celebrity as an outstanding romantic painter, beyond his large circle of friends and admirers in the West of England, came only in his 92nd year, when he held his first London one-man show.

Reg Gammon was an excellent and successful illustrator who, thanks to the lucky chance of foul weather on a sketching holiday in Ireland when he was well into his sixties, turned to oil paint in desperation after his watercolours were repeatedly washed away by the rain. The moment was one of rapture. All his carefully nurtured illustrative skills were abandoned in the discovery of the fiery joys of oils.

He was born the son of a local builder in the village of Petersfield, Hampshire, in January 1894. He would have joined his father in the business but for a serious foot injury during his schooldays at Churcher's Col-

lege, Petersfield. Instead, in 1911 he became apprenticed to a black-and-white illustrator, Frank Patterson, whose studio was at Billingshurst, Sussex. Patterson's penwork was particularly skilful and Reg learnt his craft by watching his master at work and by copying cartoons from Victorian copies of *Punch*.

He twice enlisted during the First World War. He was first discharged on medical grounds but re-enlisted and served out the last two years of the war with the Army Service Corps. He married his wife Betty – she died in 1982 – and they settled down at Fernhurst in Sussex after his discharge. They had two sons.

Gammon's talent was spotted by the art establishment and he was offered a place at the Slade but declined. He said: "I'd have been in a rut if I'd gone to art school. The teaching wouldn't have suited me." Art school in central London would have been purgatory for such an outdoors-loving young man.

Instead he chose the precarious life of a freelance illustrator and writer, specialising in country topics. Private transport

was becoming increasingly popular in the 1930s and Gammon found regular work with the Temple Press on titles including the *Motor*, *The Light Car* and *Motor Cycling*. In 1924 he wrote and illustrated his first country feature for the *Cycling Touring Club Gazette*, a column he continued for 60 years. He placed cartoons in *Punch*. He was a keen Scout and his "In the Open Air" column for the *Scout* made such an impression that, when a new editor rashly tried to drop it, Scouts across the world protested so vociferously that the decision was rescinded.

His break into Fleet Street came in 1930 with a retainer at the *News Chronicle*. He would take his motorcycle to the Ascot races, draw the scene and have back to the office with a completed sketch for the next day's paper. He covered the Monte Carlo rally and he sketched motor-racing heroes like Henry Seagrave and Malcolm Campbell at Brooklands.

But his heart lay in the countryside and he found a mass audience of newspaper and magazine readers for the rural

Britain he depicted so lovingly week after week. Whether sketching the crags of Bowfell in the Lake District or the pretty village street in Sussex, Reg Gammon offered readers a dream world where a refreshingly cup of tea and a scene always seemed to be just around the corner at the end of a day's cycling, motoring or rambling.

The Second World War changed all that. Newsprint rationing killed off the magazines and newspaper pages on which he had relied for his income. The family packed their bags and moved to the Black Mountains in South Wales, where Reg set himself up as a hill farmer in the Llanthony valley near Abergavenny. There he introduced milk production and crop growing to the valley and successfully campaigned for electricity and the telephone to be brought to Llanllan.

Gammon happily scratched a meagre living from his 40-acre farm for 20 years. This period was of lasting value to him as an artist. He had known the country as an illustrator/journalist and organiser of hikes and cy-

cling trips. Now he got to grips with the harsher realities of the land and its people. He kept up his painting and it was during the final Llanthony years that he made the momentous change to oils. At last he could follow the trail blazed by his heroes Rousaud, Bonnard, Chagall and, above all, Gauguin.

He moved to Somerset but his increasingly sure, colour-charged landscapes were not of the Somerset levels which surrounded him. Instead he painted Brittany, remote Scotland, wild Ireland, the Welsh hills... romantic but unsentimental landscapes dominated by peasant figures working the land. He exchanged his illustrative disciplines in perspective and in colour for a wholly Expressionist view. Donkeys were blue. Calves became bright green. Red was ever-present... it was his favourite colour and, he said, helped sell his paintings.

Reg Gammon's close association with the Royal West of England Academy was formalised by his election as a full member in 1966. From then on his work was an annual highlight

of the autumn shows at the academy's beautiful galleries in Clifton, Bristol. He became an institution at RWA reviews, a sprite-like figure with twinkling eyes and a generous word for his artist colleagues.

He had a healthy distrust of popularity, but his reputation grew and in 1986, the year after an outstanding retrospective at the RWA, came his first London one-man show, at the New Grafton Gallery. The reviews were excellent and four one-man

exhibitions at the New Grafton followed, before a 100th birthday retrospective at the RWA. After such a long, happy and fulfilled life – the prolific flow and high standard of his work continued until the end – Reg Gammon died with a single regret. He had longed to see in the 21st century.

James Belsey

**Reginald William Gammon, artist and illustrator; born Petersfield, Hampshire 9 January 1894; RWA 1966; married 1917 Betty Knight (died 1982; two sons); died Bridgwater, Somerset 22 April 1997.**



Reginald William Gammon had his first London one-man show aged 92

**Announcements for Gazette**  
BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS  
(Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Weddin anniversaries, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5EJ, telephone 0171-293 2011 (24 hours), fax 0171-293 2011 or 0171-293 2012 or faxed to 0171-293 2010, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements (notices, functions, forthcoming marriages, Marriages) must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra. Please enclose a daytime telephone number.

#### Synagogue services

Details of synagogue services to be held tomorrow may be obtained by telephoning the following. Sabbath begins in London at 7.30pm.

United Synagogue: 0181-343 3889.  
Federation of Synagogues: 0181-302 2243. Union of Liberal Synagogues: 0181-302 2243. Union of Orthodox Synagogues: 0171-598 1663. Refesh Synagogues of Great Britain: 0191-349 4731. Spanish and Portuguese Jews Congregation: 0171-289 2573. New London Synagogue (Masorti): 0171-338 2026.

#### Royal engagements

The Duke of Edinburgh, Captain-General, attended the Annual Dance of the Royal Guards at the Queen's Guard Hall, London, EC1. The Princess Royal, Colonel-in-Chief, the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, attended the Annual Parade of the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, Cavalry Pioneers Training Area, Lord's Cricket Ground, London, SW1. The Queen Mother attended a concert and dinner at the Royal Albert Hall, London, SW1, and the Development Campaign, St George's School, Wimborne, Dorset.

#### Changing of the Guard

The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment presents a Guard of Honour to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, funds provided by the Welsh Guards.

#### Birthdays

Professor Bob Boucher, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, UMIST, 57; Mr Eric Bristow, darts champion, 40; Sir Robin Cater, former chairman, Distillers Company, 78; Mr Anthony Christopher, former trade union leader, 72; Mr John Crayff, football manager, 50; Mr David de Peyster, former director-general, Cancer Research Campaign, 63; Dr Thomas Faber, chairman, Geoffrey Faber, 70; Lord Gladwyn, author and former diplomat, 97; Sir Francis Gresham-Smith, former Astronomer Royal, 74; Lord Hayter, a Deputy Chairman, House of Lords, 86; Mr Alan Hoole, Governor of Anguilla, 55; Sir Paul Judge, former director-general, Conservative Party, 48; The Earl of Lichfield, photographer, 58; Sir Michael Llewelyn Smith, ambassador to Greece, 58; Mr David Machin, Under Treasurer, Gray's Inn, 63; Lady Marie, former chairman, BBC and IBA Central Appeals Advisory Committee, 77; Mr Trevor Vic-Armen Sir Godfrey Milton-Thompson, 67; Mr Buster Mottram, tennis player, 42; Miss Marian Norrie, circuit judge, 57; Mr John Owen, governor of the Cayman Islands, 58; Mr Al Padino, actor, 57; Miss Helen Paling, circuit judge, 64; Mr William Roache, actor, 65; Mr David Shepherd, artist, 66; Lord Skidelsky, Professor of Political Economy, Warwick University, 58; Mrs Veronica Sutherland, ambassador to the Republic of Ireland, 58; Mr Bjorn Ulvaeus, singer, 52.

#### Anniversaries

Births: Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of England, 1599; Sir Mark Isambard Brunel, engineer and inventor, 1769; John Keble, priest and founder-member of the Oxford

Movement, 1792; Charles Burgess Fry, cricketer and writer, 1872; Walter de la Mare, poet and novelist, 1873; Guglielmo Marconi, radio pioneer, 1874; Edward (Egbert) Roscoe Murrow, broadcaster and journalist, 1908; Ella Fitzgerald, singer, 1917; Deaths: Margaret of Anjou, Queen, wife of Henry VI, 1482; Anders Celsius, inventor of the centigrade thermometer, 1744; Katsuhiko Miyake, painter, 1889; Sir Carol Reed, film director, 1976; Dame Celia Johnson, actress, 1982; Ginger Rogers (Virginia Katherine McGraw), actress and dancer, 1995. On this day: the Dutch defeated the Spanish in the Bay of Gibraltar, 1607; the guillotine was first erected in Paris, 1792; construction of the Suez Canal began, 1859; the BBC radio serial *The Tales* ended after 21 years and over 5,400 episodes, 1969; in Portugal, a military junta deposed the government, president and prime minister, 1974; in Stockholm, the West German embassy was blown up by terrorists and two people shot, 1975; Portugal held its first free elections for 50 years, 1975. Today is Anzac Day and the Feast Day of St Anianus of Alexandria, St Heribald and St Mark the Evangelist.

Lectures

National Gallery: Tom Henry, "The Italian Baroque (iv), Guercino as a Narrative Painter", 1pm.

Edna Lumb  
Artistic Trust  
Mr Derek Flynn presented the Edna Lumb Trust Prize to Mrs Louise Jefferson and Mrs Joan Simmons at a ceremony held yesterday at the Leeds Metropolitan University. The prize is awarded by the Edna Lumb Artistic Trust to Leeds art students. A reception was held afterwards.

Victoria and Albert Museum: Gill Saunders, "Public and Private: women's lives in 19th-century art", 2.30pm.

Tate Gallery: Timothy Hyman and Paul Gopal-Chowdhury, "Lewis Corinth", 1pm.

Architectural Association (with Camden Arts Centre), London WC1: Christie Iles, Michael Newman and Judith Goddard, "Repetition", 5pm.

Luncheons

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Sir Nicholas Bonnor Bt, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, hosted a farewell luncheon yesterday at Lancaster House, London SW1, in honour of Sir Aquilino Boyd de la Guardia, Ambassador of the Republic of Panama.

Dinners

Saints and Sinners Club

The Annual Dinner of the Saints and Sinners Club was held yesterday evening at the Savoy Hotel, London, WC2. Professors David Purdie, The Right Rev Lord Ronde, Mr John Matthew QC and Mr Guy Kindersley, Chairman of the Club, were the speakers. Mr Kindersley installed Mr Jimmy Tarbuck as his successor.

Edna Lumb

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In possession proceedings by a bank in whose favour a husband and wife had executed a legal charge on the property, the onus was not on the wife to plead expressly that the bank had constructive notice of her right against her husband to have the legal charge set aside.

The Court of Appeal allowed the appeal of the second defendant against a ruling in the county court that unless she had expressly pleaded constructive notice, she could not argue at the trial that the plaintiff bank had constructive notice of her claim that she had been induced to sign a legal charge by misrepresentation.

The first and second defendants, who were husband and wife, executed a legal charge over their house in favour of the bank. After the husband's failure to comply with a demand from the bank for payment of sums alleged to be owed, the bank started possession proceedings. The wife served a separate defence, admitting that she had signed the legal charge but pleading that she had done so as a result of a misrepresenta-

tion by the husband. She counter-claimed for a declaration that she had a half share in the property free of the legal charge.

*Christopher Coney (Campions) for the wife, Michael Sullivan (Teacher Stern Selys) for the bank.*

The wife's case was that she had pleaded all the relevant facts and matters which entitled her to mount that argument. She had pleaded the legal charge (which she admitted having signed); that she was the wife of the debtor; that she had given particulars in support of her claim that her husband had made a misrepresentation to her on which she had relied in signing the charge; had claimed that she had received no explanation of the meaning and effect of the charge before she signed it; and thus contended that she had a right in equity to have the charge set aside.

The relevant substantive law

confirmed that conclusion. On the authority of Lord Brown Wilkinson's speech in *Barclays Bank plc v O'Brien* [1994] 1 AC 180 and on well-established equitable principles, the burden was not on the wife to plead and prove, that the bank had constructive notice: it was on the bank to plead and prove that it did not.

It was well established that the doctrine of *bona fide puro* or *actual or constructive notice* was a defence which could be raised to defeat a claim of an equitable right or interest, and that the burden was on the person raising that defence to plead and prove all its elements: it was a "single defence".

The speech of Lord Brown Wilkinson in *O'Brien* supported the view that the same approach to pleading and proof of constructive notice applied in *O'Brien* cases as in the standard case.

It was irrelevant in such cases whether the land was registered or unregistered: the question was whether the creditor had actual or constructive notice of the facts on which the equity to set aside the transaction was founded.

Kate O'Hanlon, Barrister

## Bank has to disprove constructive notice

### LAW REPORT

25 April 1997

It was submitted that the legal consequences of material facts did not have to be pleaded and that, if established by evidence, the legal consequence of the facts pleaded was to fix the bank with constructive notice.

The bank relied principally on the rules of pleading, in particular RSC O 18 s 2(2) and r 12(4), submitting that it was necessary to plead every ground of defence to an action for possession, including constructive notice.

In his Lordship's judgment the appeal should be allowed. Procedure and practice required that all material facts should be pleaded. In general, only facts should be pleaded: not evidence relied on to prove the facts; not points of law; not argument.

As only material facts had to be pleaded, the wife was entitled to argue at the trial, on the basis of the facts already set out in her defence and counter-claim, the issue of constructive notice. It was not necessary for her to add another paragraph expressly alleging constructive notice.

The relevant substantive law

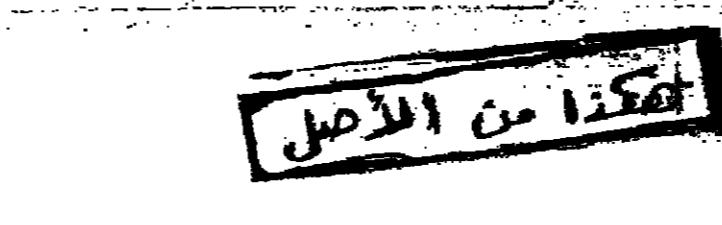
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Kate O'Hanlon, Barrister



## Jean Louis



Fourteen Oscar nominations: Louis at work for Dietrich

pulled open her dressing gown and there she was – wearing absolutely nothing. This inspired Louis to design her a minute polka-dot bikini. He also designed the heavily beaded gown in which Monroe sang "Happy Birthday" to President John F. Kennedy in Washington.

He designed more formal wear for Katharine Hepburn in both *Suddenly Last Summer* (1960) and *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967), and had fun with the low-waisted dresses and cloche hats of the Twenties for Julie Andrews in *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (1966).

Generally, Louis had excellent relations with the stars he dressed. A small, reserved and soft-spoken man, he was used by many stars to design items for their personal wardrobes, or their stage and television appearances. When Loretta Young in 1953 became the first major film star to make the transition to a weekly television series, she chose Louis to design her gowns. Each week of the anthology series *Young at Heart* introduced to the show wearing a glamorous Louis creation.

When Dorothy Lamour headlined at the London Palladium in 1950, Jean Louis designed the costumes for her act including, for her final number, a white strapless gown with a form-fitting bodice and over 20 yards of fine tulle for the skirt. At the climax of her act, Lamour would slip the gown off to reveal underneath her trademark sarong.

Louis' last film was *Ross Hunter's* best-forgotten musical remake of *Lost Horizon* (1972). He had founded Jean Louis Inc, designing ready-to-wear clothes for the public, several years before, but with changing tastes business faltered. At his Malibu beach home, he and his late wife Maggy Fisher had been noted for their elegantly lavish parties, which had further depleted his funds. In 1993, he married the star for whom he had designed costumes 40 years earlier, Loretta Young.

Tom Vallance

<b

# The swan, the ducklings and the Three Pilchards

We are beginning to crack. We cannot face writing another leading article today about the unanswered questions of this election. So let us turn to a subject of real, undisputed importance. Are you pro-swan or pro-duck?

This is a question much larger than the Cornish village of Polperro, where it has split the residents. The whole nation should take sides. Pollsters with their clipboards should drop their tedious questions about the European Union and find out what people think about dead ducklings.

Freddie the swan has been behaving as nature intended: that is, red in bill and webbed foot. The swan, which has lived in the village harbour for 10 years, has been slaughtering ducklings, which it sees as threatening the food supply of his own offspring. This is a grisly sight, apparently, turning the sleepy port into a maelstrom of carnage and destruction, and upsetting tourists and local children.

This drama in the animal kingdom raises large questions. Charles Darwin would have wrestled with the implications for human morality. The swan is not, of course, obeying the dictates of Nature, but of his genes, programmed to ensure their survival and therefore the continuation of the species. Hence his genocidal (or should we say specicidal?) instincts. As tourists and residents ponder the fluffy remains of

local mallard offspring floating in the water, they have to ask themselves if humans are anything more than vehicles for their own selfish genes.

Sadly, the residents of Polperro do not seem to have paused to consider these matters instead they have rushed to judgement, lining up with the pro-swan faction or the pro-duck faction, and some of them have behaved rather badly.

So now there are two ethical dilemmas to consider: the rights and wrongs of birds, and the rights and wrongs of human responses to the birds.

On the first, the RSPCA has taken a hard line. There is no natural food source in Polperro for swans or ducks, so both species must rely on the bread thrown to them by people, or rubbish and sewage they can scavenge. Human generosity is such that there has been an explosion in the duck population, says the RSPCA, and Freddie is bound to defend the food for his own offspring.

The RSPCA's line is to let nature - or genetics - take its course, and to condemn roundly those residents who tried to get rid of the swan by spraying it with washing-up liquid.

On the narrow point, the RSPCA is absolutely right, and there can be no excuse for trying to kill Freddie by shooting him. On the broader issue, however, Freddie (and the ducks) only survive in Polperro as a kind of outdoor pet, entirely dependent on human



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beings. So if the human beings want to move him or curtail his murderous activities, they have a moral right to do so, provided they avoid cruelty.

The trouble is that Freddie and his mate, Phreda, are *homing* swans, and would probably return if someone tried to relocate them. So there are only three options. Someone has got to shoot these swans (we appeal for more information about the presence or absence of cygnets); or Polperro gets used to dead ducklings among the flocks and jetsam; or people have got to stop feeding the blessed things, and then all the birds will go and live happily elsewhere.

This solution would seem too logical for the residents of Polperro, who have resorted to the kind of unmentionable tactics and petty hatreds that lie beneath the surface of any pretty village. Dead ducklings have been pushed through the letterbox of the landlord of the Three Pilchards, who was a swan-backer (although he has since switched, in one of the more baffling twists in this story).

Michael Howard and Jack Straw are believed to be on their way to Cornwall now to stage photo-opportunities overlooking the harbour, where they will try to outdo one another in lurid

condemnation of the teenage boy behind the bloody postings who has been reprimanded - but let off - by the local constable.

It cannot be long before Tony Blair proposes a Royal Commission, or John Major sets up a task force, or Paddy Ashdown offers to let the swan and his mate live in his back garden in Yeovil.

None of them, in this post-ideological age, will address the real philosophical issues raised by this little local difficulty. We must not simply be tough on dead duckling deliveries, we must be tough on the causes. Polperro, with its 1,585 population, ought to be a strong community, capable of resolving these kinds of conflict without provocation and rudeness. (The pub landlord responded to his tormentor by putting up a poster which read: "Latest score: Swan 6, Ducks 0." This was uncalled for.)

The trouble is that there are no real communities any more. Recent academic studies tried and failed to find a single village in England in which more than half the population was born there. And Polperro is turned every summer into a giant holiday camp, with 17,000 visitors. In these circumstances, is it surprising that people lose sight of their responsibilities to each other?

These are the questions that people are asking, up and down the country, at bus stops, in pubs (especially the Three Pilchards) and in focus groups.

But is it not just typical that no other newspaper is treating these issues with the seriousness they deserve? Instead, they are distracted by the latest populist posturing of men in suits in windowless rooms in London. Let us turn our minds as a nation to a village on the south coast of Cornwall which stands as a challenge to our moral universe.

## EU dragons need teeth

In recent days, we have heard a lot about European dragons. Little Englanders in both main parties seem to be running scared. But the lesson taught by the Calais blockade - lifted yesterday - was how weak the European Union still is. Freedom of commercial movement and fair fishing policies that conserve stocks - these either require Brussels to be given direct powers of enforcement or the means to compel nation states to fulfil their obligations... meaning more majority voting in the Council of Ministers. You do not need to be pro-European to urge reform of central EU institutions. One of the strongest justifications for European integration is freedom to trade, which can only be guaranteed if the Commission has teeth.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Hospitals that help patients to face death

**Sir:** No one could have read John Hoyland's moving description of his stepfather's death (22 April) without feeling both anger and sadness. Thirty years after the birth of the modern hospice movement, with the foundation of St Christopher's Hospice by Dame Cicely Saunders, this experience remains all too common.

In our view, it is the right of every person with a life-threatening illness to receive appropriate palliative care - care which integrates physical and psycho-social care. Whether or not they do so depends on the availability of resources as well as professional skills and attitudes. It is the responsibility of every health care professional to provide palliative care, calling in specialist colleagues if the need arises, as an integral component of good clinical practice.

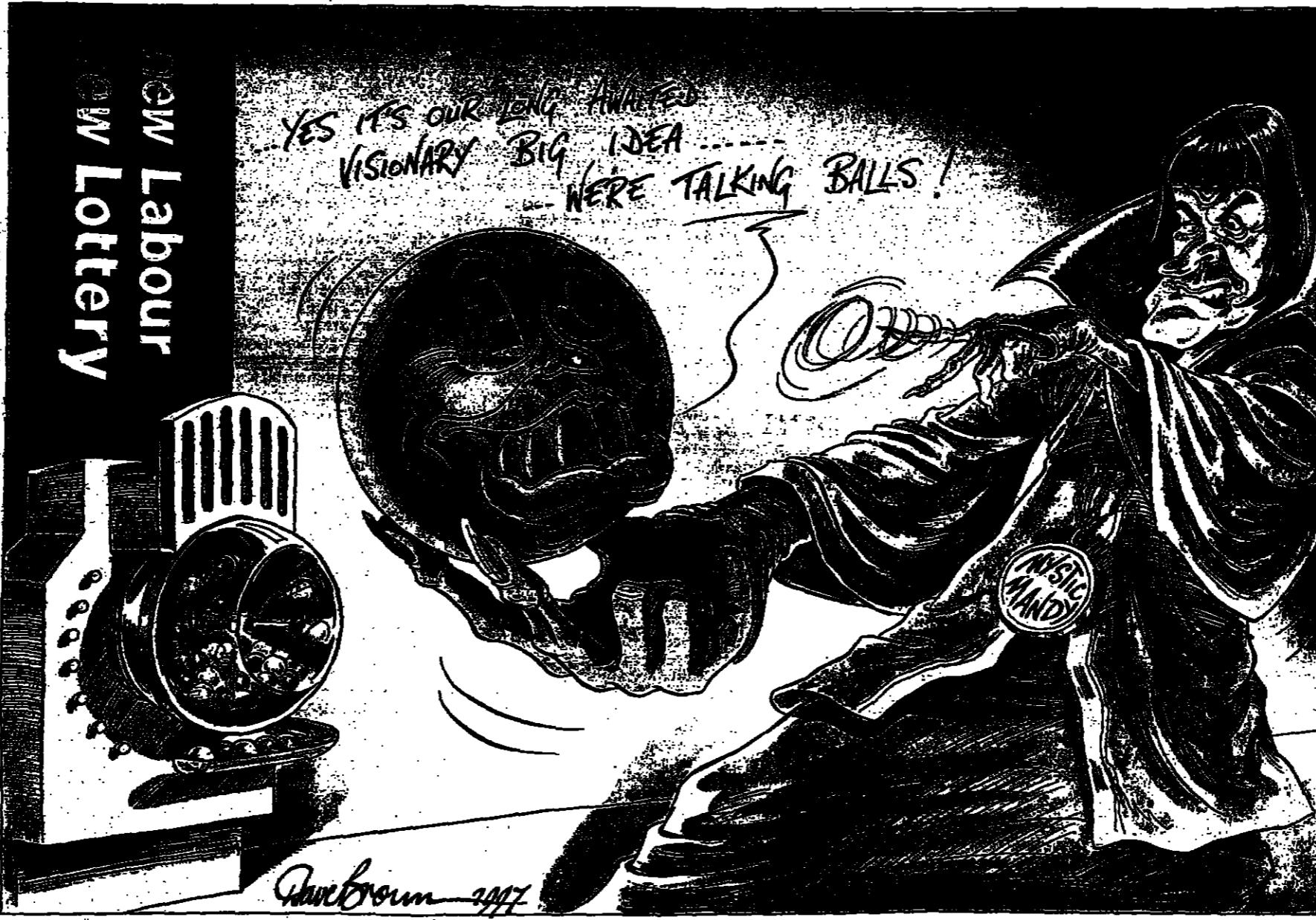
What is to be done? John Hoyland acknowledges that hospices would have provided a "supportive, loving and cheerful environment" not found in the hospitals that cared for his stepfather. The growing number of palliative care teams in acute hospitals provides another solution - but only if their role is understood and they are asked to help.

**JENNA GAFFIN**  
Executive Director  
National Council for Hospice and Specialist Palliative Care Services  
London WC1

**Sir:** When my father, aged 82, suffered a stroke last year and had to be collected by ambulance from the floor of his bungalow in Swaffham, Norfolk, he was taken to the community hospital up the road. We were asked to consider the next step: getting him a place in a nursing home and selling his property. This was all done with great sensitivity. However, because Christmas was imminent, staff and social workers agreed that he should stay at Swaffham Cottage Hospital until the New Year so that he would not be upset.

Over the next few days Dad suffered a further series of small strokes. On Boxing Day we found him a ghost of himself, both physically and mentally. His doctor was waiting to speak to us. Sitting in the nurses' room, amid Christmas gifts, the doctor gently asked us what we wished to do next. We could ask to have Dad transferred to the big district hospital at King's Lynn, where every effort would be made to resuscitate him, or we could leave him quietly where he was. We children had no hesitation in saying we preferred Dad to be left in peace. We were confident this was what he wanted. He would gain no quality of life from an extra few months bed-bound and semi-conscious.

Once we had made our decision plain, the doctor affirmed that it would be his too and we were glad this was the course we had chosen. Dad lasted a couple more days. He could not eat but was given a little to drink. He lay asleep in a clean bed, always newly washed, in crisply ironed pyjamas and with his hair combed, until he slipped away. We felt that doctors and nurses were exemplary in their approach and treatment. Suffering was not prolonged, neither was anyone in the family left with a feeling of guilt. There were no indignities inflicted on Dad and, though death was always accompanied by a sadness, his treatment at the end



could not have been better. I still feel a great sense of debt to the medical staff attached to Swaffham Cottage Hospital. Kindness, not gross medical intervention, released us all.

**JILL GALE**  
Hampton, Middlesex

**Sir:** As someone who has worked for 19 years in the NHS, initially as a nurse and more recently as a doctor, I read John Hoyland's article about the death of his stepfather with a growing feeling of pain, sadness and shame.

A knee-jerk reaction of many in the profession will be to deny the accusations or to blame underfunding, shortage of staff or current management techniques. Many will point to the fact that the introduction of the specialty of geriatrics was aimed to tackle the problems of poor communication that may result from the piecemeal treatment of multi-system diseases so common in the elderly, and argue for an increase in resources dedicated to this Cinderella branch of the health service.

Others will, rightly, highlight the role of the GP in co-ordinating care of the individual and suggest greater reduction in the role of hospitals. These points have been made forcefully within the medical and nursing professions for many years. However, a walk through the accident and emergency departments, corridors and wards of most of our hospitals will show that, at the level of the individual patient, the system frequently fails to deliver a humane and efficient service. There is a dire need for "care" as well as "cure" to be made a priority in the NHS.

**ANDREW HALL**  
Hexham, Northumberland

competition. It is now up to the ITC, as the regulatory body concerned with quality broadcasting for viewers, to take this further.

It is of paramount importance that the viewer remains at the centre of regulators' concerns. The viewer's own preferences must be central to any regulation proposed. I believe the best result could be achieved by producing a working model of an EPG to research viewers' response in advance of any firm regulatory solution.

I have every confidence that if the views of the consumers are considered at the outset, the ITC's proposals would provide EPG standards which would ensure quality broadcasting in a multichannel digital environment.

**CAROLE TONGUE** MEP  
(London East, Lab)

Biford, Essex

**Sir:** As the introduction of digital television in the UK is imminent, it is crucial that we understand the role that Electronic Programme Guides play in shaping digital television.

Over the next year or so the style of television viewing will change dramatically. Viewers will potentially receive up to 200 channels into their homes; but there will not be 200 buttons on their remote control. Viewers will have to use on-screen navigation tools to access the programmes they want.

It is the Electronic Programme Guide (EPG) which will determine the services and programmes the viewers use. There is an urgent need to establish a code of conduct for navigation systems which ensures the needs and wishes of the viewers are adequately addressed. Viewers must have fast and easy access to schedules and services as well as to favoured channels or programmes.

The Tongue Report on public service broadcasting in the digital age, adopted by the European Parliament in 1996, emphasises the importance of fair and universal access to universally funded services through all delivery systems. In particular, the report calls for an obligation to ensure that public service programming is easy to find for viewers.

I welcome the Ofcom Guidelines (March 1997), which recognise the significance of EPGs and stress the principles of easy access and fair

competition. US industries would benefit enormously.

Last year Neil Kinnock, the relevant EU commissioner, presented a White Paper on air traffic management to the European Commission, advocating the formation of single, common regulatory body for European airspace, able to deal with both civil and military aspects of its use, and which other, non-EU European governments could adhere to. Last autumn, the Commission put a formal proposal to the Council of Ministers for the appropriate transformation of Eurocontrol into such a collaborative body.

The Major government has of course been "reluctant" to pool any sovereignty in such a European body - whether on "national" grounds or because the Americans wouldn't like it is not clear.

**ELIZABETH YOUNG**  
London W2

**Sir:** What has happened to informed debate? What is in Britain's interest that is not in the interest of any other member of the European Union? What is so wrong with the recent statement by Jacques Santer (report, 22 April)? The British electorate must be the worst informed people on the planet when it comes to the EU.

During this election we have had much noise and heat generated, particularly by the so-called

Euro-sceptics who seem to regard European Union and a single currency as a continuation of the Second World War. The arguments against Europe typically use words and phrases such as "surrender", "German domination", "fighting for Britain's interests", "European threat" and so on.

This is the kind of bellicose language that would appeal to bullies, bigots and those ignorant nationalists who like to "remember the war". Each time anyone says anything remotely factual or positive about Europe or the implications of a single currency, they are regarded as committing some sort of treasonable offence.

**PETER VINTNER**  
London SW19

**Sir:** I have just returned from a visit to a mining operation, small but with enormous potential, on a Mediterranean island under the aegis of the EU. Despite 30 per cent unemployment and the willingness of the local skilled workforce, a combination of EU restrictions and local laws forbids nationals to work one minute over 48 hours a week. I was therefore surprised to see bulldozers, excavators and dumper trucks going nineteen to the dozen on Saturday and Sunday. They were all manned by Australians.

A friend who runs a horticultural business in Yorkshire recently visited Holland. At seven o'clock one Friday evening, sales discussions between him and a Dutch manufacturer were interrupted by a banging on the factory door. It was the local police - demanding to know why the lights were on and to ascertain that all the workers had gone home.

**MATTHEW ROBINSON**  
London W8

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**RICHARD BICKLE**  
Norwich

### Nation of beggars and fund-raisers

**Sir:** Whatever the result of the election the next government will look more to charities for the delivery of welfare. The "charitisation" of the economy has been a feature of the last 18 years as much as privatisation has been.

The view of the Voluntary Action History Society is that for charities to thrive, a good strong public sector is a base requisite, without which anxiety and waste prevail. The pre-Beveridge lessons are there: charities and hospitals stumbled from financial crisis to crisis, provision was patchy and largely inefficient, and fraud and corruption rife. Today, charities are forced to spend resources in a grossly uneconomical way in the annual scramble for funds.

As England reaches the Millennium it has become a nation of fund-raisers, yet all parties want to be rid of beggars on the street.

**COLIN ROCHESTER** (Chair)  
**DR JUSTIN DAVIS SMITH** (Secretary)  
**RODNEY HEDLEY** (Committee Member)  
Voluntary Action History Society  
London SE5

**Feel good enough for a gamble?**

**Sir:** Our foreign-owned media have conspired to hide the feel-good factor from us. Overseas communications, especially those in Europe, are bemused by the fact that the Conservative government gets little or no credit for creating the most successful economy in Europe.

Conversely, on the doorstep, we find that the feel-good factor is emerging in a strange way. Some voters are so confident in the future that they feel that they can safely gamble on a period of socialist rule. This is a back-handed compliment to the Conservative government: but at what risk?

**EDWARD KELLETT-BOWMAN, MEP**  
(Lichfield, West & Avon, Con)  
Chrischurh, Dorset

# Why Norman's feeling bullish again

Michael Howard, an old friend, drops in on the former chancellor's campaign in rural Yorkshire. In such visits the Euro-sceptic battle for the Tories' future is taking shape, says Donald Macintyre

**M**ichael Howard is getting slightly impatient. His friend of more than 30 years, Norman Lamont, can't decide what book to choose. Hammick's of Harrogate. On a whistlestop election tour of Yorkshire the Home Secretary has been lured into the bookshop where both have been promised a freebie to celebrate something called World Book Day. Lamont asks for the just published *Virtual History* by the right-wing author Niall Ferguson. "It's all about the what ifs – you know, like what if Norman Lamont had become Prime Minister?" Sadly, it is not in stock.

At this point, Howard, in deference to his tight schedule, strides purposefully over to a display pile of Alan Bennett's *Writing Home*. Lamont: "You can't possibly get that, Michael, he's a terrible old lefty." Howard: "I think it's thoroughly appropriate. It's a perfectly good Yorkshire book." Lamont: "Well, it's got lots about Harrogate, I suppose." Now, Rosemary Lamont suggests for her husband *The English Patient*. But wait: this is the screenplay, not the Ondine novel. The novel was then sought and found. There then ensues a discussion about the film, which she has seen but neither Howard nor Lamont have. Mrs Lamont says:

"There's a marvellous piece in *The Spectator* by Freddy Forsyth. Don't read it before you see the film. It absolutely takes the history apart."

Howard murmurs that he isn't quite sure how all this is going to help the Tories win the general election. As the party leaves, glimpsing the lurid cover of *Appassionata*, Lamont says: "Actually I think I'd have preferred Jilly Cooper." Howard determinedly keeps walking out into the street.

We are privileged to be here at all. For, unusually, Lamont has imposed a "no national media" regime on his campaign. Indeed the only way you can invade his air space is by arriving with a senior Cabinet minister. "I take the [Tomy] Benn view. That you people get between us and the people. Anyway, I am fighting a campaign here. I really can't be bothered to give interviews all the time. I don't see the point. Some people don't think they're alive if they aren't appearing on television." Today, however, he is geniality itself. His campaign shows every appearance of going well. Whether because he is more instantly recognised than any other Tory backbencher, or because of the energetic work he has been putting in since he was selected for the seat last year, he is given star treatment during their stroll through the town.

Normally, (the famous) Cabinet minister approaches an innocent member of the public and introduces him to (the little known) parliamentary candidate. Here, however, Lamont does the introducing. He is particularly popular



at the cab rank. As he modestly points out, it is a £15 fare to Thorp Arch, just outside the constituency where his wife comes from, and where they are both living, and he is one of their best customers. One driver even proudly displays a piece of paper with Lamont's autograph on it, gathered on just such a journey. When we meet a young man who is far from sure about voting Conservative, Howard asks him what he does. He names the local restaurant where he works as a waiter. "Oh yes," says the former Chancellor thoughtfully, "they do excellent fettuccini there."

Nevertheless Lamont is campaigning hard. His unusual poster is his own design: the Day-glo shocking pink in which his name is picked out ran during printing into the blue background, giving it the fetching purple look. Peter Mandelson has now favoured for Labour. And so is his leaflet, a lot of it devoted to the candidate's stand against cuts imposed by the Liberal Democrat council. Never mind that as Chancellor he severely reduced the proportion of local authority discretionary spending. This is, as the leaflet proclaims, "the man to fight for Harrogate and Knaresborough". He is especially proud of his campaign to save the Bilton library from closure. Above all, the liberated Lamont grandly ignores the policy of the government of which he was a member until 1993 by expressing "total" opposition to a "single European currency which will lead to a European state". He

brushes aside the question about the repeated rumours that in the event of a Tory defeat he will stand for the leadership on a straight platform of EU withdrawal. But while there aren't many things that Lamont agrees with John Major about the centrality of Europe to the campaign is one of them. He is utterly adamant – and this time utterly serious – in saying after weeks of personal door-to-door canvassing that "Europe is the No 1 issue of this election".

This makes Michael Howard a highly appropriate visitor to Harrogate. And not just because he and Lamont have known and liked each other since they were contemporaries in the Cambridge Union. Howard has been prominent among those who argued, in the end successfully, that Europe needed to be elevated in the Tory campaign. He

could not be more scrupulous, given his total opposition to the single currency, in defending the policy of "negotiate and decide" on EMU. He refuses, more vigorously than the Prime Minister himself, to discuss the prospect of defeat, and the consequences, which must be much on his mind, for his own career. Among the 60 odd candidates he will have visited by the end of the campaign, many, like Lamont, have used the freedom given them by Central Office to flout government policy and declare their outright opposition to the single currency. This will not do him any harm if and when it comes to the leadership contest he resolutely refuses to discuss.

But neither his views, nor, to be honest, the rich populist seam into which he taps are in doubt.

Howard is a pro-active campaigner. He bounds up to shoppers and has no compunction in asking them both how they intend to vote and how they voted last time before telling them that "unemployment's coming down, crime's coming down. We're on the right track. Stick with us." He loses no time in memorising for later use the figures given him by Supt Frank Farmer at Leeds's once beleaguered Chapeltown police station. Supt Farmer says frankly that he doesn't think the ending of the right to silence has made much difference on his own patch, but he is utterly enthusiastic about the advent of CCTV

in his area. His figures are music in Howard's ears: detection of violent crime up 19 per cent; street robberies down 20 per cent; overall crime down 12.5 per cent. Howard will repeat these figures in a series of interviews, sharply warning a slightly abrasive Yorkshire Television reporter that the broadcast will be monitored and if he leaves out an answer saying that only the Tories are promising an extra 5,000 policemen and another £75m worth of CCTV over five years, there will be an official complaint. This is not to say his approach always works; the Finsbury constituency of the Tory candidate Peter Bone, a woman eloquently told Howard as he neared off the 33-point plan he has for speeding up the criminal justice system: "You've had a long time to do a lot of things, and now you're saying you're going to do a lot of things." But in Yeadon, where there has been a spate of shop crime, one belligerent shopkeeper said he didn't see why young offenders had to go to court at all. Why couldn't they just be banged up straight away? This was too much even for the most

right-wing Home Secretary since the war. Perhaps for the first and only time in this campaign

Howard was forced to defend himself against the charge of being soft on crime.

Howard in the greengrocer's in Yeadon is worried about Howard's arguments on education but then also says, after he has gone, that she is worried about Europe. Worried how? "That we are losing our national identity." Suddenly you begin to see what Labour is frightened of.

This isn't to say that doubts over Europe are actually determining voting behaviour. On Wednesday, after the ICM poll, it looked as if they might be. Now that's not so clear. One of the more experienced candidates Howard met yesterday had some interesting advice to pass on about the state of the campaign. It didn't major on Europe; instead it suggested Central Office should be making more, especially among Asian voters, of Labour's plans to scrap the assisted places scheme; and of the Tories' promise to introduce an allowance for married couples looking after children or elderly relatives. The main problems he identified: in rural constituencies, farmers were upset at the import of beef which had not been exposed to as rigorous testing for BSE as its home-produced equivalent, and Labour's claims about the abolition of the basic state pension.

What Europe does do is to identify the probable battleground to come. You can't be sure, because they won't talk about it. But it's now a racing certainty that if either Portillo or Howard becomes leader they would envisage, at the next election, a Tory platform that demanded renegotiation of Britain's relationship with the EU, backed by the clear threat of withdrawal if she failed to get her way. Howard's Eurosceptic record is not in doubt and unlike Redwood he cannot take the blame for being disloyal. But last weekend's little spat about the importance of the Amsterdam summit between Clarke and Howard was a harbinger of what may come. Howard always wanted Europe at the top of the Tories' campaign agenda. Clarke, who will surely stand, always feared it would obscure the party's economic message. Portillo, Heseltine, and Hague could all be formidable rivals. There will be deep doubts about Howard's election winning potential. But Howard has the pressure on Major to rule out a single currency; he has experience of office. He has assiduously courted editors from the *Daily Mail*'s Paul Dacre to the *Sunday Telegraph*'s Dominic Lawson. In a party that will swing still further rightwards after Thursday, he can't be written off.

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## All the (strange) news that's fit to print

"**I**f the Tories get back in," said someone the other day, "it will prove that truth is stranger than fiction."

But truth is stranger than fiction.

There are baffling news items that I read 30 years ago which still stick in my mind, more clearly than any fiction I read at the time.

One was a report in *Time* magazine that the Republic of Andorra had just realised it was at war with Germany. They had declared war on Germany in the Second World War, like many countries. Unlike all the others, they had forgotten to repeal the declaration at the end of the war. Hastily, 25 years later, they did so before Germany could march in again.

Another unlikely item I read at that time concerned television in Ireland. One night, as *Television Eireann* closed down, hundreds of Irish viewers reported that transmission actually continued for some while after, of some broadcast by an American station with an identifiable call sign. Investigation showed that there was indeed such a station

in the USA but that it had closed two years previously.

And these odd things are still cropping up in the papers, to torture someone like me who is trying to invent stranger things. For instance, I used to think that what happened in Louis Malle's *Lift to the Scaffold* could not happen in real life. This is a film about a man who commits the perfect murder and is just leaving the building in the lift when the caretaker (thinking the building is empty) switches off the main power. Result: the lift stays where it is half-way down, and the man is condemned to spend the whole weekend in the lift, not 100 yards from his victim, when he is meant to be getting away from it all.

When I first saw the man's desperate attempts to escape from the lift, I remember comforting myself with the thought that such nightmarish things never happen. But last week there was a story in the *Bristol Evening Post* about two cleaning ladies who were finishing their shift in a Bristol office block at 8am on the previous Saturday when their lift jammed. There was nobody else in the building.

is clearly impossible, because for a car to get stuck in the track, it would have to be facing along the track, ie travelling in the same direction as the train. How could that happen?

Easily, explained the *Chronicle*. The driver was trying to do a three-point turn on the level crossing when he got stuck. The road leads to a cul-de-sac, and maybe the driver was trying to turn and retreat. He just chose a damned stupid place to do it.

Another impossible incident was reported last week, though I only saw the headline and not the story. It was on Friday, I think, when I was leaving Paddington in the direction of home that I saw an *Evening Standard* headline: "WOMAN SETS FIRE TO LONDON MUGGER". I wish I had learned more of this bit of stylistic retaliation. But I learnt all I wished to know in *The Guardian* recently of a tale of sexual revenge in Thailand. (Sensitive readers may wish to skip this next bit.)

It seemed that a woman in provincial Thailand was fed up with her husband's infidelity, so she cut off his penis as he slept. Apparently this is not so uncommon in Thailand, and there was indeed a hospital near the man's home which specialised in reattaching male genitalia. But mindful of this and in order to prevent it happening, the woman had attached the guilty penis to a helium-filled balloon while he still slept and launched it into the sky.

Now, once you start thinking about these stories, you start wondering. You start wondering why neither of the cleaning ladies' families bothered to worry when they didn't come home. You

wonder how a man can go on sleeping after his penis has been cut off. But however odd and untrustworthy a story seems, it does stick in your mind, and I shall always remember the image of this balloon with its grisly cargo, and the man frantically revving the engine on the railway line at Bradford-on-Avon, and the image of Andorra being tempted to try a surprise invasion of Germany, and the long-dead American TV station beaming in on Ireland from outer space...

What I wouldn't do is dare to make any of them up.



Miles  
Kington

They were trapped all Saturday and were still there Sunday morning. If it had not been for someone who had come back by chance to get some extra work on Sunday morning and heard their cries for help, they might have been there for two days, might even have died. There was another impossible story in our local paper last week. The *Bath Chronicle* reported that a train at Bradford-on-Avon hit a car on a level crossing because the car's wheels were stuck in the track. Now, this

## My race? You can mark me down as multiracial

**What** next for Tiger Woods, who must already be an even-money bet for *Time* magazine's Man of the Year, although 1997 is not yet a third of the way through? A fortnight ago, he blasted the sport of golf into a new age. Now he threatens to detonate a bomb under an even older and more pervasive American practice: that of identifying people by their race.

Yesterday he appeared on

that most influential of Ameri-

cans tributes, the Oprah Winfrey Show, and introduced a new word into the language. He did not regard himself as black, but as "Cablinasian", a compound term covering his own exotic provenance: a dash of Caucasian, a dollop of black, a leavening of Indian and a topping of Asian. In his case part Thai and part Chinese.

Now young Tiger was being

a mite disingenuous, having

dedicated his victory at Augusta

not to Cablinasians but to black

golfers past, so long denied the

right of even competing there.

For the average American, too,

as he well knows, he is a black.

Indeed even his own father,

referring to the traditional attire

of the Masters' winner, de-

scribed him as "a black in a

green jacket". But the age of the

Cablinasian has dawned, and

not before time. America's way

of classification by race is col-

lapsing under the weight of its

absurdities.

The practice is as old as the

country, dating back to the new

republic's first census in 1790,

with its three categories of "free

white male", "free white

female", and "slave". Later the

process was refined, with the addition of

"mulatto", "quadroon" and "octo-ron".

But early this century these niceties were scrapped and replaced in practice by the infamous

"one-drop" principle that helped seal the

segregation of the races in America. One speck

of black in the pot of white paint, this theory ran, and purity was irretrievably lost.

From the Fifties on, of course, attitudes to

race (circular ones, at least) changed. Jackie

Robinson played baseball for the Brooklyn

Dodgers, and the civil rights movement devel-

oped with the noble-minded programme of

affirmative action, designed to combat

racial discrimination in school and workplace.

Suddenly that drop of black blood could have

advantages in a white world. Claim it, and a

place at college, on a training course or in fed-

eral or local government might be secured

under quotas reserved for blacks and minori-

ties, despite academic results that had you

applied as a white, would have been too

to qualify.

The system, of course, could be, and has

been, abused – one reason why affirmative

action and quotas are so unfashionable today.

Perforce, a person identifies his own race; hand

that task to a government bureaucrat and you

summon the shades of Nazi Germany and

apartheid South Africa. But racial self-

identification fails for other reasons, too. The

present American census form offers seven

specific choices: black, white, Hispanic, Ameri-

can Indian, Alaska native, Asian, and Pacific

islander, plus an eighth category of "other".

In the 1990 census, almost 4 per cent of the

population opted for this last, despite its connot-

ation of subspecies or second-class citizenship.



Rupert  
Cornwell

**The golfing hero Tiger Woods identifies himself as Cablinasian, a mix of Caucasian, black, American Indian and Asian**

If nothing changes, one of this number, when the next census rolls around in 2000, will be Tiger Woods. Thanks in part to him, however, there is a distinct chance that the situation may change.

Our Cablinasian Masters champion is but one of the millions of Americans who can only be classified as multiracial. By 1994, according to the US Census Bureau, there were 3 million interracial couples in the country, and even black Americans, traditionally less prone to marry outside their race, were doing so three times as often as they did in 1970. The method of counting them, however, no longer measures up. (Nor, incidentally, does the language. Spanish has the word *mestizo*, for people of mixed race, to which no equivalent exists in English.)

Why the ever-growing multiracial contingent argues, should it members tick a single racial category, denying a half or a quarter of their heritage? The present classification may suit the purposes of affirmative action. But does a multiracial person belong to a minority – and, if so, which minority? Theoretically there is another answer, of ticking more than one box on the census form. But in a country addicted to statistics, that would create the statistician's nightmare of totals adding up to more than 100 per cent.

True, black Americans do still often argue for the *status quo* as a means of preserving a sense of ethnic identity, or, in the case of radicals such as Louis Farrakhan, of strengthening demarcation lines between the races.

Already, however, several states have taken the obvious step of adding a "multiracial" category to their official forms, and this week the Congress held hearings on whether to make similar changes to the census form and other federal documents.

But why not make the advent of the Cablinasian Tiger Wood a cue for a bolder, even better move – that of scrapping official racial classification in its entirety? One strand in the eternal American dilemma over race is the contradiction between the goal of fostering a sense of racial pride and identity, and the notion of America as melting-pot, where every ethnic and racial tension one day will miraculously dissolve. These aims ought not to be contradictory. But in an imperfect human world they are, and formally categorising people by their race only makes the problem worse.

More so even than General Colin Powell, Tiger Woods offers some balm for America's racial wounds. Beyond his graceful manner and amazing athletic ability, he embodies something new in America, of multiracialism on the march. Not that awful, twisted parody of multiracialism that was the OJ Simpson affair, but a reality that lies in the face of his country's obsession with racial differences. Like ever-growing millions of Americans, he is a walking melting-pot. If, from his example, America can somehow devise a new concept of race, the benefits will be for all of us.

Take this writer. English by culture, British by passport; and beneath that in my veins courses a dollop of Irish, a drop of Jewish, a pinch of German, combined with a heap of Anglo-Saxon. Scratch the skin, and we're all multiracial.

## They want our vote, not our opinions

by Suzanne Moore

**H**ang on a minute guys. As Jon Snow pleaded on Channel 4 News the other night, "There is nothing that turns the electorate off more than seeing politicians arguing about statistics." Not quite. There is nothing that turns off some of the electorate more than seeing four men bickering about figures, especially when two of them are Michael Howard and Jack Straw.

Cast your mind back, if you can, to a few weeks ago. This election was going to be about women. Women's votes were to decide its results. The gender gap recognised by the Clinton campaign was to be addressed. All those female floating voters, the twichy switchers, were to be wooed ceaselessly in terms of policies and presentation. So what has happened?

A very simple but effective piece of research called *Watching Women*, published yesterday by The Fawcett Society, shows exactly what has happened. It is basically a head count of the women who have appeared during the election news coverage. The week monitored was 4-10 April, and the programmes studied were the daily election output of all four terrestrial channels. A record was made of the number of appearances of those contributing to, presenting, commenting on or reporting the election news, whether they were Michael Howard or a vox-popped woman in the street. The aim was to see how comprehensive this coverage was in reflecting the population with regard to gender.

During the period monitored women made up only 16 per cent of appearances in the election news coverage, and only 20 per cent of election news items were covered by female journalists. Female politicians hardly made it on to the screen at all, with eight appearances compared with 127 appearances by male politicians. Seventeen male academics were consulted during that week and not one female one. The Fawcett Society points out that, contrary to popular opinion, women watch just as much news as men. In fact they watch the main television news programmes in slightly higher numbers. As Shelagh Diplock, director of the society, says, "Women's votes will decide the result of the next election but women are almost invisible in the election news coverage. With a week to go before polling day, broadcasters would need to use wall-to-wall women to get anywhere near restoring the balance."

Now, one might argue that

even wall-to-wall women might

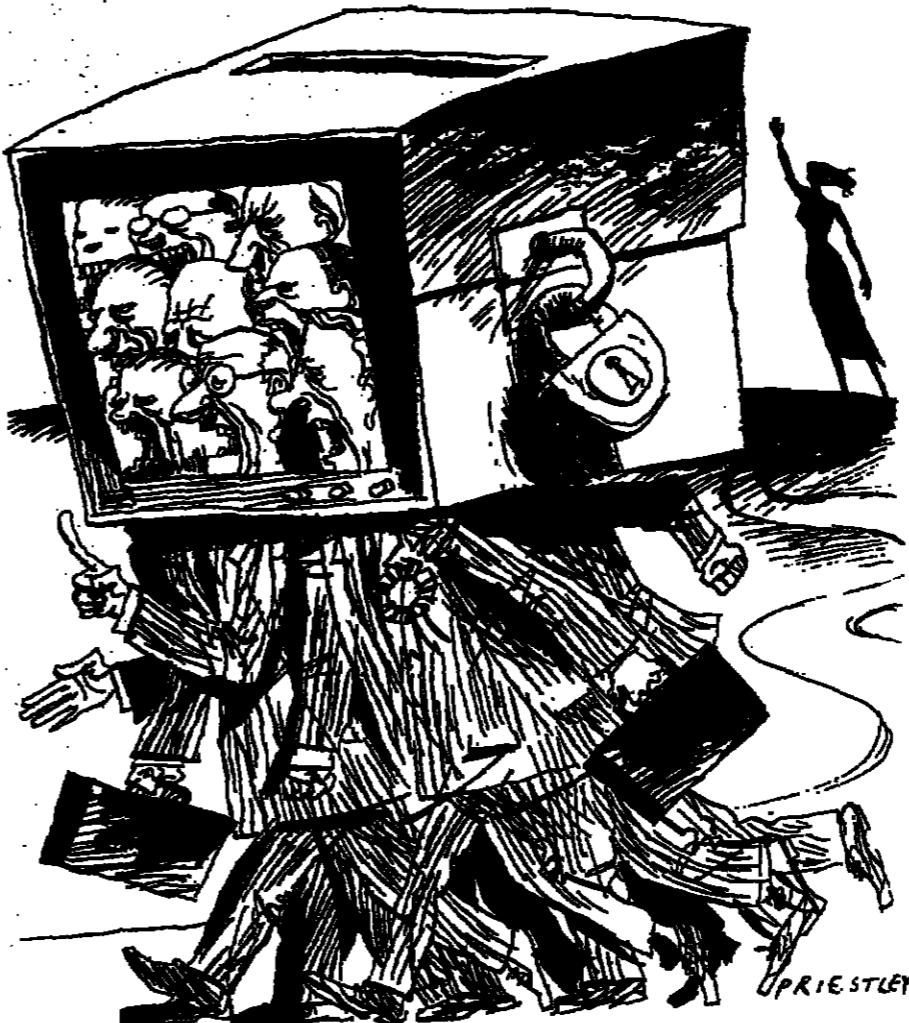
not impress female voters, that it

is a nonsense to suggest that

women can only be governed by

women, that it does not matter

that much of what we are



The great unmentionable is that women want power. Fakers that we are, we tell men into thinking they can carry on as normal

watching, listening to and reading is dominated by men. Yet the overwhelming feeling this produces is a mixture of tiredness and boredom and – if you can be bothered – anger. If men cannot make the effort now, during this supposedly crucial time, when can they?

If the spin doctors on all sides feel that their female politicians are not an asset, if all the experts just happen to be male, if serious interviews can be left only to the Paxman/Dimbleby brotherhood, then "ordinary women" are interviewed they are captioned as "mothers", "single parents" or "widows", what hope is there?

The big E – Europe, the economy, employment, are we told by men, what this election is about. But employment seems to refer only to male employment, and the economy and Europe are presumed too complicated for those of us sadly born without penises to comprehend. What we end up with is patronising little bundles of issues that are aimed at women but assume women's only interest is the family. Yet the issues that relate the domestic sphere to the public world of work – parental leave, child care, the rights of part-time workers, the minimum wage, child benefit, pensions – have been completely overshadowed.

I do not expect much from the Tories, but I was led to expect more from Labour. What a shower of arrogance has rained upon us. If spin doctors took any notice of their own focus groups, these men would not hide away the disbelieved and disarming women politicians such as Clare Short and Mo Mowlam in favour of the acceptable clones, such as Harriet and Jowell. They would not have turned Cherie into a Stepford wife whom one expects to malfunction at any minute. "You must give me that recipe ... The theory that Cherie is in fact an alien – "Just look at the eyes" – was put to me fairly persuasively the other day by a man who appeared otherwise fairly sane.

Perhaps, though, it is all our fault. Perhaps we just don't try hard enough. Perhaps we are just not hard enough for the ballyhoo world of press conferences and high jinks on the back of the bus. Shirley Williams says that at press conferences the female journalists are not the ones asking the questions. The cliché is that women just do not function well in these adversarial situations,

but that is not the whole story. The point-scoring, the hinted-at, behind-the-scenes intimacy, the social lubricants that make the whole machinery run, were designed by men for men. It is not that women are somehow superior. We can be as awful, as arrogant, as obtuse, as any man. All we are after is what men take for granted: that our gender is not constantly noted – and that can be achieved only by a more equal balance.

We have, I fear, been too reasonable for too long. We have tried to seduce men into thinking we can enter into their system without disrupting it, that we can slip in quietly through the back door. The result, as the Fawcett research so clearly shows, is that nothing much changes; that politics lags behind the real world, where women are achieving.

Of course, the great unmentionable, the thing we keep to ourselves, is the idea that we want power. Oh no, we don't want power, we say, batting our eyelashes; just equality, a fairer system. Fakers that we are, we tell men into thinking they can carry on as normal, that there will just be a bit more skirt around. The truth is that more women would mean fewer men. In terms of this election it would have meant that the boys would not have been interviewed by the other boys quite so often; it would have meant that a whole raft of issues from gay rights (remember them?) to nursery education to the feminisation of poverty would have been taken more seriously. It would have meant fewer women being observed through two-way mirrors by researchers, and more women observing. It would have meant that the gap between the views of middle-aged men and the views of vast swaths of the population who do not need to be told that family and unemployment structures have changed radically would begin to be addressed. Who knows, it might even have meant that more of us felt that the election had something to do with us.

A week to go, and we are still expected to be grateful for crumbs from the high table. But we are not; we are hungry for change, a change that means more than a change of government. Why should we support a system that makes us invisible? If those who would govern us can't even see us, why on earth should we see any of their points of view? It's not the switchers that should make the politicians so nervous, it's the switched off.

## ADVERTISEMENT DANGERS OF MAY DAY



*It may come to pass  
The socialist class  
Will find a job  
In Brussels at last:*

*The minimum wage  
Puts men off stage  
Job seekers suffer  
New Labour rage.  
Costs hit prices  
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As socialists back  
E.C. regulation.*

*It will come as no surprise  
That Blairism damages Enterprise.*

*Aimed by Aims of Industry,  
40 Doughty Street, London WC1*

## Ulster dialogue? It's a slanging match

The women's coalition is speaking up for consensus amid Unionist rancour, says David McKittrick

**T**hree members of the Northern Ireland women's coalition are standing in the election on a platform of consensual accommodation, apparently undeterred by their traumatic introduction to party politics in the Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue.

The women tell with amused near-disbelief of their experience in the forum, an institution which has fallen spectacularly short of the official aspiration that it might promote dialogue and understanding.

It has cost the Government more than £5m in less than a year; it is supposed to bring the politicians closer together; both Labour and Tories have promised to prolong its life; yet it has become a byword for acrimonious division.

It has become the scene of rancour. In a recent debate on BSE, members had some difficulty in making out the words of the women's coalition representative, Monica McWilliams. As she spoke, the Rev Ian Paisley's son, Ian Jr., kept up a commentary: "Mooo," he intoned. "Mooo, moooo, moooo." It was a fairly typical day in the forum.

In that instance the traditionally bovine Paisley sense of humour was in evidence, but on many other occasions the forum has lived up to its reputation for straight unpleasantness and discord. "Sit down, you are an idiot," Paisley Jr. called to Unionist MP Ken Maginnis. "Shut up, you," he shouted at another member.

"Moo" is a popular Democratic Unionist Party word. Iris Robinson, wife of DUP MP Peter Robinson, said of the

women's coalition: "They are doing their best to destroy anything that smacks of Unionism or Protestantism. Thank God only 7,000 idiots voted for these women."

The tone, in other words, has been not one of courteous discourse but of confrontational insult. The Hansard-style record of proceedings is studded with impudent remarks: "Excuse me, Mr Chairman," one Unionist interjected. "You were not on the gin and tonic last night, by any chance?"

Sometimes the tone can go beyond uncouthness and verge on menace. "There is, if people are not careful, going to be violence in Northern Ireland," Democratic Unionist Jack McKee warned during a debate on loyalist marches. "The blood of the Ulster traditions are interfered with. I want to say they ain't seen nothing yet."

Like many Unionist members, Mr McKee is strong on asserting loyalist marching rights. Thus in a debate on roads and transport his concern was not confined to the provision of thoroughfares. "I want to say one thing before starting properly," he declared. "It is all right building these roads, but are we going to be allowed to march up and down them? That is one issue that will have to be tackled."</

# business & city

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## Co-op sees off Regan's £1.2bn bid

**CWS vows to hound Lanica chief and his City co-conspirators 'to their graves'**

Nigel Cope  
City Correspondent

Andrew Regan abandoned his audacious £1.2bn break-up bid for the Co-operative Wholesale Society yesterday after his City backers pulled out. The decision ends one of the most astonishing takeover attempts of recent years, a battle that pitted a 31-year-old entrepreneur against a 310-year-old movement steeped in the co-operative tradition.

The CWS, however, continued its offensive and commenced criminal proceedings against Mr Regan and a civil action against his financial advisers Hambros Bank and his lawyers, Travers Smith Braithwaite.

The dramatic end came after Nomura International, the Japanese bank which was providing the Regan camp with £1.2bn of debt finance, became increasingly nervous about the use of stolen documents in the bid. It was also concerned about Mr Regan's explanations of a £2.4m payment to an offshore company two years ago.

It is understood that Nomura had been repeatedly asking Hambros for assurances regarding the cash payment to Trellis International in January 1995.

It sent a letter to Andrew Salmon at Hambros on Wednesday night demanding a more detailed explanation regarding the payment, made to a Swiss bank account number 207766 for assistance in negotiating a contract with the CWS.

It set a deadline of 9am yesterday morning for the response. Though a reply was received by the deadline, Nomura did not find it satisfactory.

As it prepared to pull the plug, Mr Regan issued a statement through Galileo, the Lanica Trust offshoot being

used for the bid, saying the company would "not be pursuing its proposal".

Mr Regan was said to have behaved "maturely and professionally" as his bid collapsed. He was not available for comment yesterday though one insider said: "It had reached the stage at which Galileo felt it was not right to continue the proposals." One insider said: "He reacted bravely. I thought he was quite impressive."

Mr Regan's withdrawal came ahead of a court hearing today at which the CWS is set to launch a scathing attack on the young entrepreneur. The Co-op promises "to brand Mr Regan and his advisers for what they are and hound them to their graves".

The CWS yesterday launched a barrage of legal action against Mr Regan and his team. It announced private criminal proceedings against Allan Green, its former retailing controller who was suspended last week and has admitted obtaining confidential Co-op documents and passing them on to Mr Regan.

Criminal proceedings have also been started against Mr Regan and his right-hand man David Lyons for aiding, abetting, counselling or procuring the theft and for handling stolen property. A hearing has been set for 28th May in the City of London magistrates' court.

The police have not yet been brought in but the Co-op says that "remain an option". The information was laid before magistrates yesterday.

The CWS has also commenced civil proceedings against Hambros and Travers Smith Braithwaite. It claims both firms acted in breach of equitable obligations of confidentiality to the CWS. It is understood that the CWS is also pursuing individuals within Hambros.



Andrew Regan (far left) and his wife (second from left) at a table paid for by the Co-operative Wholesale Society at the Institute of Grocery Distribution Christmas ball at London's Grosvenor House Hotel in December 1995. Mr Regan was the guest of Allan Green (top, third from left). Mr Green and his colleague David Chambers (centre, at front) have now been suspended as CWS executives

A CWS spokesman said: "We have been advised that there is clear evidence that both these organisations acted in breach of an equitable obligation of confidentiality to CWS. They had no credible grounds for believing that there was any legitimate basis for Mr Regan to have any such documents. Nevertheless, they proceeded to make unauthorised use of those stolen documents."

Graham Melmoth, the CWS chief executive, sent yet more curt letters to Mr Regan's advisers yesterday. One, dis-

patched to Hambros' chairman, Lord Hambro, asked whether Hambros' lawyers were told that Mr Green had stolen CWS board minutes disclosing the legal and financial advice the society had received in relation to Mr Regan's offer.

"If not, what were they told? If they were told the true position, how on earth could they (or you) have concluded that Mr Green was in any way authorised to pass such documents on to Mr Regan?"

It closes: "If your legal advice was so clear and supportive, presumably you will have no difficulty in making a copy of it available for all to see. The CWS has been a victim of a wide-ranging dishonest conspiracy to steal its documents. I mean to get to the bottom of it."

Sainsbury's yesterday wrote to the CWS admitting that it was approached by Mr Regan about the possible acquisition of some of CWS's larger supermarkets. It says it was provided with a list of CWS stores with approximate sizes and estimates of associated car parking spaces and a list of figures "purported

to be sales figures for individual CWS stores for 1994".

It says the details on store sizes were provided by Hillier Parker, surveyors, and were therefore not regarded as confidential.

On the sales figures, it sought, through its advisers, Lazard, to obtain assurances from Hambros that the information had not been obtained improperly.

The letter from Sainsbury's group secretary, Nigel Matthews, closes: "I should also like to confirm that Sainsbury's terminated discussions with Mr Regan and his advisers on Wednesday 16 April and have had no further discussions since."

It is understood that the regulatory authorities such as the Department of Trade and Industry and the Securities and Futures Authority may yet decide to get involved in the affair. It emerged yesterday that the CWS had written to the Stock Exchange asking it to investigate whether any shareholders in Galileo traded shares in Lanica with the benefit of inside information.

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What led to bid collapse?

Andrew Regan's £1.2bn bid for the Co-operative Wholesale Society collapsed yesterday after his City backers pulled out.

Regan's bid was based on the assumption that Nomura International, the Japanese bank which was providing the Regan camp with £1.2bn of debt finance, would back him.

However, Nomura became increasingly nervous about the use of stolen documents in the bid.

It was also concerned about Regan's explanations of a £2.4m payment to an offshore company two years ago.

Regan's withdrawal came ahead of a court hearing today at which the CWS is set to launch a scathing attack on the young entrepreneur.

The CWS yesterday launched a barrage of legal action against Regan and his team.

It announced private criminal proceedings against Allan Green, its former retailing controller who was suspended last week and has admitted obtaining confidential Co-op documents and passing them on to Regan.

Criminal proceedings have also been started against Regan and his right-hand man David Lyons for aiding, abetting, counselling or procuring the theft and for handling stolen property.

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## business

# Regulator set to approve British Gas price cuts in South-west

**Chris Godsmark**  
Business Correspondent

Clare Spottiswoode, the gas industry regulator, is poised to approve British Gas's controversial package of selective price cuts in a ruling which could provoke uproar among rival suppliers and have long-term consequences for competition.

Her decision on the discount scheme, which has cut some British Gas bills by up to 12 per cent in the first domestic competition trial area in the South-west of England, will not be announced until after the election. Earlier indications from Ofgas, the watchdog, of a pre-political announcement were optimistic given an unexpectedly large response to the public consultation exercise.

Centrica, the demerged

British Gas supply business, revealed the price cuts last month after losing 20 per cent of its customers to rival suppliers in Devon, Cornwall and Somerset since the trial began last May.

The package, the first time British Gas has varied its tariff on a regional basis, also gives direct debit customers a 6 per cent cut, doubling their discount, if they sign up for a year.

Ms Spottiswoode is understood to have told some rival gas companies that she is "minded" to let Centrica continue with the price cuts, known as Value Plus. The move would be another sign of the thaw in relations with the company since it demerged from British Gas, now BG, in February. Earlier this week Ms Spottiswoode indicated she would be sympathetic to Centrica's efforts to avoid Labour's windfall utility tax.

Ofgas has also studied the wording of the Gas Act which paved the way for competition. It says her role is to "establish" competition but does not say she must "sustain". Centrica has argued the loss of 20 per cent of its market share means competition has been achieved.

Centrica's Value Plus would benefit some consumers but strongly opposed its introduction. Sue Shipman, GCC director, warned that the decision could stifle competition as the industry moved towards full national choice next year.

Four of the largest independent suppliers, Beacon, Eastern, Calortex and ScottishPower, all vehemently opposed the price cuts. Evidence from Calortex claimed that, since the introduction of Value Plus,

more than 80 responses to the

consultation process, of which more than half were in Centrica's favour. The company has mobilised considerable support from some unusual sources, including letters to Ofgas from three of its banks privately arguing that the cuts were a vital plank of its business plan.

The Gas Consumers Council recognised Value Plus would transform the competitive playing field. The chief executive of a large oil group, who did not want to be named, warned the price cuts would discourage the company from moving into the domestic gas market. He said the group was waiting to see how competition developed and would examine potential profit margins.

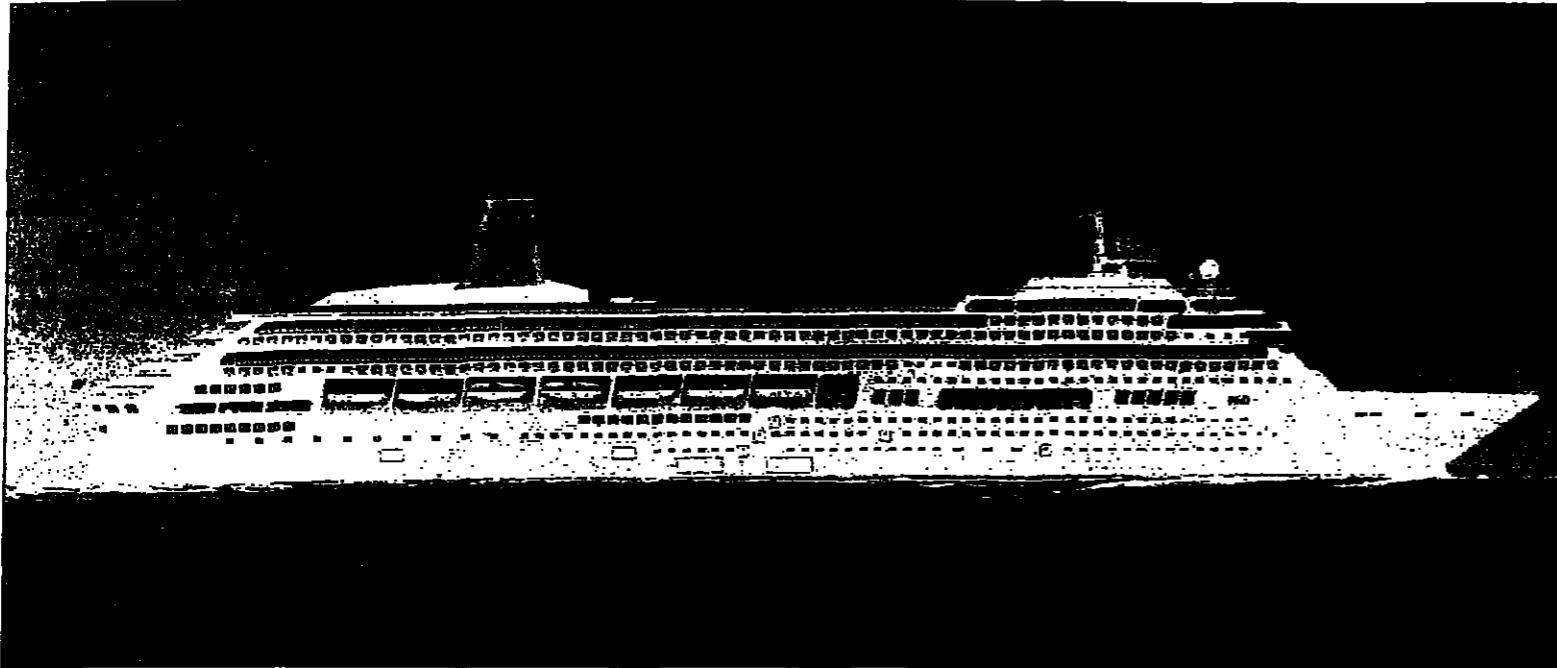
Ofgas said it had received more than 80 responses to the

numbers of homes switching from British Gas had dropped alarmingly.

The independent gas companies say British Gas could extend the price cuts to the newest trial area of Kent and Sussex, where competition is more fierce. In two months Centrica has lost about 20 per cent of its customers. Ms Spottiswoode has told rival suppliers her ruling on the South-west would not necessarily apply to the South-east.

Alan Liss, Beacon's managing director, said competition was not established yet. "These are still trial runs. The damage has already been done by British Gas in encouraging customers to believe if they stay with the company they will eventually get the same discounts. There's still tremendous inertia in the market."

P&O cruises into the new century with £200m round-the-world superliner



A new £200m superliner would enter the cruise market in the millennium, P&O Cruises announced yesterday. The 76,000-ton ship will be built at the Meyer Werft shipyard in Germany and will be delivered for service in the spring of 2000. The ship, which has yet to be named, will carry more than 1,800

passengers on world-wide cruises operating out of the UK. More than 400 cabins will have private balconies and 22 cabins will be designed for passengers with disabilities. Gwyn Hughes, managing director of P&O Cruises, said the superliner would move cruise ship design into the new century and set new

standards. The 886ft-long ship will join the *Oriana*, the *Arcadia*, which enters service this year following the retirement of the *Canberra*, and the *Victoria* in the P&O fleet. Earlier this year P&O's subsidiary, Princess Cruises, announced plans to introduce a 77,000-ton liner in 1999, to be called *Ocean Princess*.

## Betterware chairman defends £9.8m dividend

**Magnus Grimond**

Andrew Cohen, the executive chairman of Betterware, whose family effectively controls the catalogue retail group, yesterday denied that a special £9.8m dividend was being paid to benefit his family just days before the possible election of a Labour government.

One City observer said of the latest move: "There is a problem in paying out a £9.8m dividend principally to yourself. You could say it's in the interest of all the shareholders, but it is in their interest to flush all of the cash into Mr Cohen's pockets just before a general election? I don't know."

Mr Cohen denied any selfish motives yesterday and said the decision to pay the dividend had nothing to do with the election, declaring himself "not a political animal".

The proposed special divi-

dend was being made for the benefit of all the shareholders, he said.

Referring to his family and his fellow directors, he said: "We kept 50 per cent of the equity all the way through. As far as we are concerned, the company is very cash-generative and we have no plans for this cash."

He said there would have been other complaints if the group had used the money, some £12.6m at the beginning of March, to buy in its shares, which might have raised earnings per share, boosting performance-linked executive bonuses, or increased the family's control.

The announcement came as Betterware announced a rise in pre-tax profits from £9.29m to £11.5m for the 12 months to 1 March.

**Shire to distribute inflammatory drug**

Stire Pharmaceuticals is to distribute Hoechst Marion Roussel's Calcot drug in the UK for 10 years from 1 May, with an optional five-year extension. Calcot treats inflammatory conditions such as asthma and rheumatoid arthritis without the side-effects on bones usually associated with oral corticosteroids. The drug is already prescribed in European countries.

**Pre-tax profits double at Austin Reed**

Austin Reed doubled pre-tax profits to £6.8m last year, on turnover up 7.5 per cent from £72.7m to £78.2m. Earnings per share climbed 7p to 14.2p. The company said retail businesses were the star turn of 1996, with turnover up 10 per cent, boosted by growth in its womenwear division. However, external manufacturing turnover fell from £13.7m to £13.5m, with operating profit falling £1.1m to £800,000. The company blamed slack demand in Europe and the increased strength of the pound. Colin Evans, chairman, said the company was continuing to reposition Austin Reed as the "modern British brand" and planned to increase its distribution of Austin Reed mens and womenswear in the UK this year.

**Snakeboard unlikely to meet forecasts**

Snakeboard International said it was "extremely unlikely" it would meet the forecasts contained in the company's AIM admission document. The company said that following the announcement made on 11 March about its trading position, trading performance in February and March had continued to be substantially below expectations. The company's first interim report and business review will be published during the week starting 19 May.

### Company Results

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Austin Reed (F)	70.2m (72.7m)	6.77m (3.98m)	14.2p (7.2p)	6.5p (6p)
Betterware (F)	60.7m (£4.0m)	11.5m (9.29m)	7.5p (5.9p)	12.83p
Brookstone Publishing (F)	13.6m (11.4m)	1.2m (1.01m)	9.67p (7.69p)	3.5p (3.4p)
Car's Milling (F)	43.0m (42.4m)	1.70m (1.53m)	13.6p (14.1p)	3p (2.6p)
Dunham (F)	44.8m (39.6m)	-0.84m (-0.72m)	-	n/a (-)
Finsbury (F)	18.22m (18.02m)	1.15m (1.15m)	14.01p (14.26p)	2.54p (2.55p)
Follies Group (F)	40.4m (46.1m)	5.07m (4.75m)	14.43p (10.96p)	1.902p (2.442p)
Hopkinsons Group (F)	98.7m (-11.4m)	0.81m (-0.34m)	0.41p (-0.19p)	1.3p (1.3p)
ICI (F)	2.40m (2.38m)	70.0m (22.0m)	4.7p (16.3p)	n/a (-)
Lewis Anthony (F)	22.0m (20.7m)	16.2m (10.3m)	4.2p (2.67p)	1p (0.5p)
Wimpy Ridge (F)	22.0m (20.8m)	17.4m (16.0m)	20.5p (20.5p)	8.5p (8.2p)
Ugland (F)	63.2m (28.6m)	3.05m (1.19m)	5.98p (4.76p)	n/a (-)
Wellington Underwriting (F)	(-)	10.5m (2.22m)	20.2p (8.6p)	8.5p (8.5p)
	(F) - First (I) - Interim (B) - First quarter	+ special dividend of 9.31p also paid		

Walker rose by 4 per cent to £1.73bn last year, on which the company made a profit of £216.5m before interest and tax. The results were helped by the sale of its Pubmaster chain of public houses for £171m last November and by settling the dispute over the value of the William Hill betting business it bought from Grand Metropolitan, the giant food and drinks group, in 1989.

Brent Walker received a net payment of £36m from the settlement with Grand Met. However, the dispute with Brent Walker's former chairman, George Walker, over the sale of its French vineyard in 1989 cost the group £3.28m.

Brent Walker still has debts of £1.5bn and interest charges cost £165.9m last year. The company's loan agreements with its bankers run out at the end of this year and the company must sell its remaining asset or renegotiate its debts. If it decides to retain William Hill, this would require the banks agreeing to extend the current facilities, Sir Brian said.

He said Abbey National was now selling general insurance to all customers rather than just mortgage customers.

The "millennium issue" could cost Abbey National more than £50m in adapting the group's computers and other technical systems, Ian Harley, finance director and the executive director in charge of information technology for the group, told the annual general meeting yesterday. "It could well cost more than that if put together with the issue of converting for the euro."

Lord Tugendhat, chairman, said he was very much in favour of Britain playing a part in a single European currency. "The volatility of sterling is much greater than other European currencies."

Abbey National's share of the increase in UK new mortgage business has improved since the last quarter of 1996 but remains below its 14.7 per cent share of the market.

Lord Tugendhat said money continued to be tied up in the converting building societies, and Abbey's share of retail savings flows had been well below stock levels, but the underlying performance was better than last year.

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The options open to Brent Walker include floated William Hill on the market, reversing it into a shell company, finding a merger partner or looking for a trade sale. Bass, the breweries and hotels group that owns the Coral chain with 930 betting shops in the UK, is widely regarded as a potential buyer.

Group turnover at Brent

## THE INVESTMENT COLUMN EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

# ICI fails to beat the ups and downs of the chemical cycle

They as it might, ICI can not seem to escape the rack of the chemicals cycle. It has spent the 1990s trying to exit commodity businesses and launched two big cost-cutting and productivity initiatives in an attempt to provide some insulation from the vagaries of the market. Yet first-quarter figures announced yesterday were again hammered by a familiar combination of currency effects and collapsing prices.

Pre-tax profits crashed from £223m to just £70m in the three months to March. The group said the strong pound shaved £40m off the bottom line while its "best guess estimate" for the full-year impact has been raised to £30m or so to £120m since February.

The worst damage came in the division most exposed to the cycle, industrial chemicals, which dived into a £13m loss from profits of £87m in the same period of 1996 and £143m the year before.

The plunge is perhaps not surprising, given a 58 per cent fall in polyester prices and 22 per cent slumps in tioxide suffered up until earlier this year.

It is ironic that volume growth in the upper teens for both chemicals has not been translated into better returns, but may augur for better times in the rest of the year, while prices are starting to move up again. If nothing else, the combination should provide a decent background for the flotation of the tioxide operation, pencilled in for late this year or early next.

Another disappointing area was the materials business, which sank from £61m to £24m. Profits in acrylics, the raw material used in some paints, plastic batons and similar products held up well. However, the firms' and polyurethane businesses both wilted in the competitive heat and Asian over-capacity remains a problem.

Paint, which more than doubled its contribution to £30m, remains ICI's star operation. But Charles Miller Smith, the former Unilever manager who now sits in ICI's chief executive's chair, cannot rest his strategy of bringing the group closer to the consumer on this one division. Buying some

of the Unilever speciality chemicals operations recently put up for sale might help, but the group was keeping mum on that yesterday.

Yet ICI is too big and the pace of competition too relentless for it to escape the cycle completely. With £76m of savings achieved in these figures, it looks set to achieve the target of £400m benefits to the bottom line by the end of this year. But much of those will have to be given away to customers unless its rivals cut capacity more aggressively. So, even with the improving outlook, the shares at 700.5p, down 20p, look fully valued on a forward p/e of 19.

### Retail group still fragile

Betterware's management has worked hard to restore the catalogue retailing group's fragile reputation since 1993 when sentiment was hammered by ill-timed share sales by the controlling Cohen family. The shares have bounced from the low of 38.5p hit two years ago, but even after a 7.5p rise to 119.5p yesterday, the recovery seems to have peaked over the past 12 months.

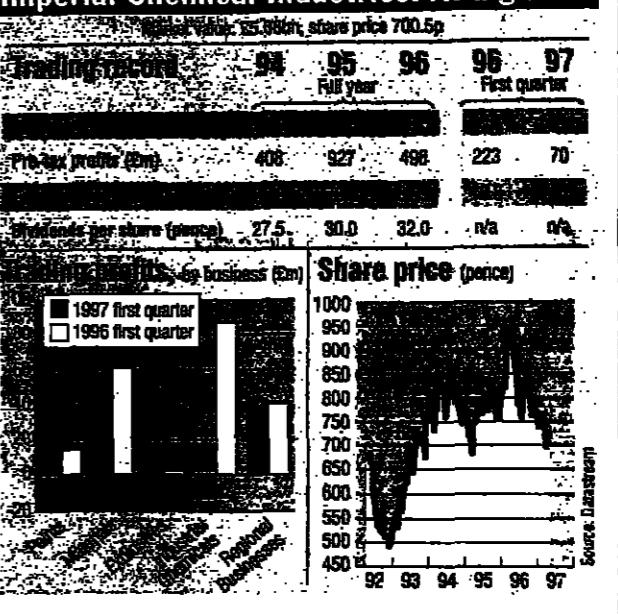
There is clearly plenty for the City to remain nervous about. The reputation of Andrew Cohen, chief executive, took a knock after the share sales. With 46 per cent

of the shares, his family is again set to be the chief beneficiary of the £9.8m to be paid out under the new special dividend proposals announced yesterday. Even coming so close to the possible election of a Labour government, Mr Cohen probably deserves the benefit of the doubt given that the possibility of a special payment was mooted six months ago.

More pertinent is the underlying trading picture at Betterware, which yesterday reported a 24 per cent jump in pre-tax profits to £11.5m for the year to 1 March. The figures are complicated by losses in the previous year on the former plastic moulding business and another VAT repayment, which garnered £1.25m in 1996/97.

But at the sales level, the company insists a slowdown in second-half growth in the UK from 16 per cent in the previous period to just 7 per cent last year is not to be taken as evidence of a maturing market. It remains confident it can achieve "high single-figure" growth over the next few years. Even so, the real excitement must come from abroad. Europe could chip in £1m to profits this year, while the Latin American joint venture with Avon, which moves into Brazil next month, could be contributing at least that much by 1998/99. Flat profits of £1.5m in the current year would put the shares on a forward p/e of 16. High enough.

### Imperial Chemical Industries: At a glance





# The home ownership boom is pushing up unemployment

Could the British love affair with home ownership be the chief culprit behind the upward trend in unemployment over the past few decades? It is a timely question just as the housing market appears to be teetering on the brink of another boom and the answer appears to be yes.

New research<sup>1</sup> by Professor Andrew Oswald at Warwick University, which will present at the Department for Education and Employment after the election, suggests that the consequences for the jobs market of an upward trend in home ownership have been profound. Increasing owner-occupancy and declining private renting have been associated with an upward trend in unemployment. Private renters have a noticeably faster rate of movement out of unemployment into jobs.

Teeth-grindingly irritating as it might be to admit it, there might have been a grain of truth in Norman Tebbit's "get on your bike" message – not that the government he belonged to did anything to make mobility any easier. Quite the reverse – extending home ownership was one of the icons of the Thatcher era. The expense and difficulty of selling a house and buying another is one of the things that prevents people who lose their jobs from moving on.

It makes sense to suppose that the markets for housing and for jobs are linked. The "structural" unemployment rate in a country, or the rate below which inflationary pressures will emerge, will depend on a whole range of factors that influence the costs of searching for work versus remaining unemployed. These include obvious things such as the level of benefit payments, but an unemployed person's job search outside a very restricted geographical area will also depend on how easy it is to move house. The fact that it is expensive and difficult to move cements high unemployment rates in particular towns and areas.

Yet policies to reduce unemployment ignore the possibility that housing matters. We have had deregulation in the labour market and in product markets, but the housing market is more rigid than ever. Policy-

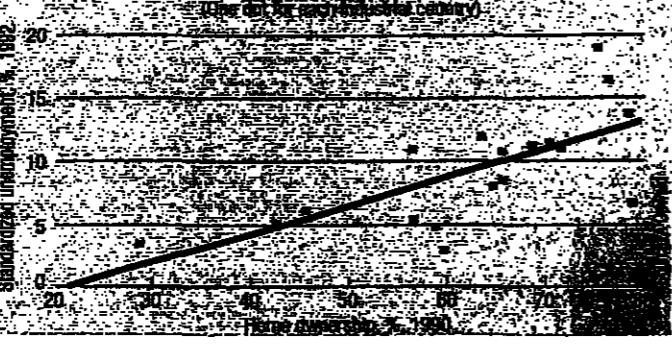


Diane Coyle

**The difficulty of selling a house and buying another is one of the things that prevents people who lose their jobs from moving on**

makers have also paid scant attention to the geographical distortion a high rate of home ownership imposes on the economy, despite the fact that the housing market boom is once again a South-eastern phenomenon. Southern house prices that ratcheted higher in every boom will make mobility between jobs in different regions even less likely.

#### Correlation between home-ownership and unemployment



The evidence Professor Oswald presents is compelling. He looks at patterns of unemployment and home ownership over time across countries, and across regions within countries. In all cases, the higher the rate of owner-occupancy, the higher the (male) unemployment rate. Thus high-unemployment Finland, Ireland and Switzerland have widespread owner-occupancy, while countries like Portugal and Spain, not to mention the US, where renting is far more the norm, have very low jobless rates. The housing market is better than alternative explanations like benefit rates at explaining the international pattern.

It is a pattern that holds over time, too. The bigger the increase in owner-occupancy, the bigger the rise in unemployment. A 10 percentage point rise in home ownership adds 1.5 to 2 percentage points of joblessness.

In the UK, for example, the home-ownership trend cannot explain all of the trend rise in unemployment, but can account for the bulk of it. With a 30 percentage point rise in home ownership during the past few decades, it can explain around six additional percentage points on the unemployment rate. Events like the oil price shock will lie behind the rest of the increase.

If his theory is correct, it has profound implications for economic policy. In 1950 only 29 per cent of families owned their own home. By the early 1990s the owner-occupation rate had climbed to 70 per cent. The proportion renting privately

had declined from 53 per cent to less than 10 per cent.

Separate research<sup>2</sup> fingers extensive home ownership as one of the reasons for the regional imbalances in the British economy. One of the driving forces of the late 1980s boom and subsequent bust was soaring house prices combined with equity withdrawal following the relaxation of mortgage controls. Housing wealth increased from £307bn in 1980 to more than £1,000bn by 1989.

The housing-driven boom was concentrated in the South-east and led to a widening of the north-south divide. This was amplified by cuts in the upper rate of income tax, which favoured the South-east because that is where most high earners live.

The author, Professor Chris Hammett of King's College, London, writes: "The boom of the late 1980s was not a national phenomenon but was in fact a boom in, and for, the South." This pattern is being repeated in the current housing and consumer boom.

The failure of economic policy to take account of the housing market will have serious repercussions for countries which join the single European currency. The main economic concern about EMU is whether some countries would tend to suffer persistent high unemployment if the possibility of a reduction in their exchange rates were removed. If the single currency does turn out to condemn some countries to higher-than-average joblessness, it will be important to devise ways of making it easier for people to move across national borders.

In Britain, housing policy must move up the agenda. It is unfinished business in the creation of a flexible and low-unemployment economy, and in the fair distribution of opportunities between the regions.

\*A conjecture on the explanation for high unemployment in the industrialised nations," A. Oswald, Warwick Economic Research Papers no. 47, Dec 1996.  
\*\*A Stroke of the Chancellor's Pen; by C. Hammett in 'Environment and Planning' 1997, vol 29 pp 129-147.

# Top jobs at the end of the tunnel for Sir Alastair

## PEOPLE & BUSINESS



In the market for a job: Former Eurotunnel head Sir Alastair Morton

Sir Alastair Morton is back from trekking around the Peloponnese for the last three months after giving up the mantle at Eurotunnel. He is in the market for a new job, and my informants tell me one of the sinecures being touted is chairman of Airbus, when the European aircraft maker converts to plc status in 1999. Other jobs with which Sir Alastair's name has been linked in headhunters' parlours include the Post Office, Cable & Wireless and BAA.

However, insiders say the favourite is still BG, the transmission business of British Gas, which was formerly called TransCo. Sadly Sir Alastair was not available for comment yesterday, since he has just jetted off to spend a month in his native South Africa.

Ernest Saunders of Guinness fame has been searching the City looking for a PR man to represent him, I hear, although without success thus far. Mr Saunders had been working as a consultant for David Elias, the publisher, in recent years, but the pair have parted ways and Mr Saunders is now flying solo. Any takers?

Which would you rather have done? Played drums for the Beatles or headed up a UK accountancy firm? David McDonald, who has had his mandate as managing partner of Grant Thornton extended until 2001, nearly had the choice.

David hails from Liverpool and went to Quarry Bank High School in the 1950s, when John Lennon was also a pupil. While at school young David played drums for a skiffle group which briefly included Lennon. Happily – or sadly – according to your taste – David left his rocking days behind and emerged as a leading bean-counter.

Speaking of accountants, nothing can stop the rise of Robert Smith. He's already the president of the Scottish Institute of Chartered Accountants, as well as the man chosen by Deutsche Morgan Grenfell to head up their asset management arm following the messy Peter Young débâcle. Yesterday Richard Cole,

executive, was wearing a brown two-piece which, to onlookers at least, appeared to be exactly the same outfit she wore at interims six months ago.

Brown is the chosen fashion colour of the year, but consumers don't seem to be buying it. Witness Laura Ashley's stock levels, which rose 50 per cent in the year.

As one rather unkind analyst (male) said: "She could have picked out a little number from one of the shops and returned it this afternoon."

Marjorie Stihmell has finally tired of the world of Mammon after eight years at HSBC Investment Bank as head of public affairs. Now she tells me she is off to take a place on a Sotheby's graduate programme in Asian art.

She writes: "Whatever you call it – downshifting or dematerialising – I have decided it is time for a change of direction for the remaining years of my working life, building on a lifelong interest."

Dematerialising? I sincerely hope we will be seeing more of Marjorie.

John Willcock

### Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Sterling	Dollar	D-Mark				
Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	1 month	3 months	1 month	3 months
US	1.2823	8.6	24.21	1.000	—	—	—
Canada	2.2542	61.36	170.162	1.3523	29.28	82.80	0.9594
Germany	2.2842	70.63	207.169	1.7770	33.31	99.96	10.0000
France	2.2842	70.63	207.169	1.7770	33.31	99.96	10.0000
Italy	2.2761	65.42	191.94	1.7720	26.35	72.51	9.9700
Japan	2.0510	98.95	265.260	1.2511	54.53	157.155	73.4508
ECU	1.4327	24.20	72.65	1.1344	11.12	38.38	0.9354
Belgium	1.0624	35.45	101.00	0.8544	7.5	21.00	20.6430
Netherlands	1.3143	85.77	226.223	1.3508	39.37	121.15	125.00
Ireland	1.0428	20.5	54.8	1.5007	—	—	—
Spain	2.2563	125.139	379.04	1.7720	32.01	104.24	104.24
Sweden	12.683	223.169	640.302	1.7769	41.15	152.11	146.53
Australia	2.2798	93.38	274.260	1.4262	43.46	145.13	138.00
Hong Kong	2.2400	67.36	194.700	1.2892	6.8	14.16	13.7000
Malaysia	4.0750	0.0	0.0	2.2507	27.30	80.85	74.95
New Zealand	2.2447	25.2	74.95	1.1448	22.24	65.67	64.945
Singapore	2.2448	0.0	0.0	1.0441	24.19	70.63	0.9491

### Interest Rates

UK	Base	Germany	US	Japan	Belgium	5.0%
Country	3.5%	Lombard	Prime	Discount	Belgium	0.5%
France	3.5%	4.5%	5.0%	5.25%	2.50%	0.5%
Italy	3.5%	4.5%	4.75%	5.0%	2.50%	0.5%
Netherlands	7.5%	8.0%	8.0%	8.0%	10.0%	1.0%
Advanced	2.70%	—	—	—	3.25%	—

Yields calculated on local basis.

Source: *Financial Times*, 15 April 1997.

### Money Market Rates

ONight 7 Day 1 Month 3 Months 6 Months 1 Year

Interbank 5% 6% 5% 6% 5% 6% 5% 6%

Sterling CDs 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5%

Local Authority Depts 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5%

Building Society Deposits 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5%

Dollar CDs 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5%

ECU Linked Deps 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5%

Other CDs 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5%

Term Deposit 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5%

Dollar CDs 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5%

ECU CDs 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5%

Other CDs 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5%

Yield basis: 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5% 5%

Source: *Financial Times*, 15 April 1997.

### Tourist Rates

£ Buys

Australia (Dollar) 2.0200

Canada (Dollar) 15.1120

Denmark (Kroner) 65.5000

Greece (Drachma) 423.5000

Iceland (Króna) 0.9100

Ireland (Pound) 0.8100

Malta (Lira) 0.8200

New Zealand (Dollar) 2.2200

Norway (Krone) 10.4200

Portugal (Escudo) 270.0000

Spain (Peso) 227.2500

Sweden (Krona) 12.2000

Switzerland (Franc) 2.3100

United Kingdom (Pound) 1.0000

Yugoslavia (Dinar) 1.0000

£ Buys

France (Franc) 8.1475

Germany (Mark) 10.2000



## sport

# Villeneuve backs return to 'real racetracks'

### **Motor racing**

DERICK ALLSOP

reports from Imola

Springtime in Emilia Romagna: trees in blossom, a gentle sun caressing the hillsides vineyards and the promise of the nation's finest pasta. For some, a definition of heaven.

For the Formula One fraternity, however, this corner of Italy will forever rekindle a vision of hell, and the adjournment of the Ayrton Senna trial, just down the road from the Au-

todromo Enzo e Dino Ferrari, cannot deflect from the conscience the horrors of the San Marino Grand Prix three years ago. Another consequence is a circuit neutralised by a chicane at the point where the Brazilian was killed, and a backlash from drivers demanding a return to "real racetracks".

The Canadian claims he speaks for others, as well as himself, when he denounced rule changes scheduled for next year, which include the introduction of narrower cars and grooved tyres, intended to bring down lap times and improve racing. Fewer and fewer, apparently, now have faith in that theory.

Villeneuve said: "The changes

furthermore, he reiterated here yesterday, that he thinks Formula One racing is becoming boring to the extent that if he and others will seek fun, if not fortunes, in IndyCars. The money will not be enough to keep me here for long. Other drivers, too, have said they are looking at the other side."

The Williams-Renault driver is perceived by some as a moaner, in which case he will be in good company while he remains in Formula One. Giancarlo Fisichella, a new boy at Jordan-Peugeot this season, made it plain yesterday he had

no time for his team-mate, another new boy, Ralf Schumacher, after their dust-up in Argentina, where the German barged the Italian out of his way en route to third place.

Eddie Jordan, the team owner, has given the pair a lecture and Schumacher apologised for the incident, but Fisichella said: "Our friendship is finished. I will always be correct on the track, and we'll work together on the car. But away from the track there will be nothing. We are not together."

Jordan may face the first test

of his "team discipline" in Sunday's San Marino Grand Prix, when Fisichella's knowledge of the circuit may give him the edge over the ultra-combative Schumacher. Eddie Irvine would like to think he will discover on Sunday if the authorities are prepared to meet his request for a flag depicting a shamrock to be displayed on the podium in his honour. Better still, if they are prepared to play the non-sectarian Londonderry Air to mark victory, The Ulsterman stood beneath the Irish tricolour after taking second place in Buenos

Aires and, as a result, his parents received threatening phone calls.

Irvine, who lives in the Republic and is licensed as a racing driver there, wants to avoid any implied commitment to either the tricolour or the Union flag, suggesting the shamrock symbol would be a politically and socially acceptable compromise.

He said: "It can be a help being Irish and British, and this has not caused me problems, but it has for my father and mother back home, and people who work for me. Politics should be kept out of sport."

## Seve set to make first cut of year

GOLF

ANDY FARRELL

reports from Madrid

After coaching Tiger Woods to become the youngest and most comprehensive Masters champion ever, Butch Harmon did not have to look far for an encore. The man obviously likes a challenge. For his next trick, Seve Ballesteros may make his first cut this year.

Four under after 11 holes, Ballesteros could have done even better than his 70 in the first round of the Peugeot Spanish Open. He is four behind Germany's Alex Cejka and the defending champion, Padraig Harrington, who has managed to bring the form from his maiden win as a rookie at Club de Campo a year ago to the tournament's new venue at La Moraleja II.

Ballesteros finished third here in the Osi pro-am last October, an event won by his American counterpart as Ryder Cup captain, Tom Kite. But this year, the Spaniard's playing rations have been strictly limited to two days at a time. If that changes this weekend, it will have been built on the security of birdies at three of his first four holes yesterday.

It meant that a loss of concentration on the back nine was not disastrous. He left his recovery shot in a bunker at the short 13th and took three putts on the next. At 15, his eagle pitch lipped out, the birdie a formality, but a wild tee shot at the 17th cost another shot. Overall, Ballesteros was encouraged. "It is my best score and the best I have played this year," he said.

"I believe I played better than a 70, but the last six holes were a bit unstable. I have been working with Butch at the Masters, at Santander last week and again here and I am very positive that things will change. I have won in the 70s, the 80s, the 90s and I will still be winning in 2000."

Strangely, Ballesteros denied that the world No 2, Greg Norman, was here because the Spaniard had agreed to play in Norman's tournament in Australia. "My manager Roddy Carr made the deal with Greg. Maybe Roddy will play in Australia," Seve said.

Norman shot a three-under 69, the same as his playing partner, Jose Maria Olazabal, who received Spain's highest sporting honour, the Gold Medal, on Monday night. On Wednesday Norman had a bull dedicated to him at a bullfight but he declined the invitation to have a go himself. "I admire the courage of the matadors," the shark said. "I wouldn't want to be in there doing that."

Cejka, who came home in 30, and Harrington, who made six birdies in eight holes from the fourth, led by one on 66 from club pro Gary Emerson and Mark James. The Ryder Cup veteran is another emerging from a spell where his game went wrong with his game went wrong with his game.

At least this year's late-May fixture bottleneck has been eased. Wednesday night's defeat means United's growing concern about free-to-air rights should be more relatively fresh for the 31 May World Cup tie in Poland and available for the warm-up match with South Africa at Old Trafford on 24 May.

Photograph: David Ashdown

## The end of King Eric's reign is nigh

Glenn Moore on Manchester United's exit from Europe and its consequences

The verdict on Manchester United's tilt at European glory could be read in the stands on Wednesday night. In the closing moments of their 1-0 defeat by Borussia Dortmund, when it became obvious that they would not overturn the 2-0 aggregate deficit, United's followers passed judgement.

They had been deathly quiet for 20 minutes as chances came and went to the accompaniment of German drums. Now, as the dream of a place in the European Cup final disappeared, they stood, not to head for the exits, but to acclaim their team, and their conquerors.

Dortmund deserved the applause for their resilience and their opportunism. United deserved it for their efforts on the night and across the season. They had given Old Trafford more than they dared hope for in the autumn, after the trouncing in Turin and two humbling defeats at home.

The fans' view was reflected within the club. After the failings of recent years, simply reaching the semi-finals was an achievement. United could recognise that, for all Alex Ferguson's public protestations, they were not good enough to go further. They have been beaten five times in the competition, including

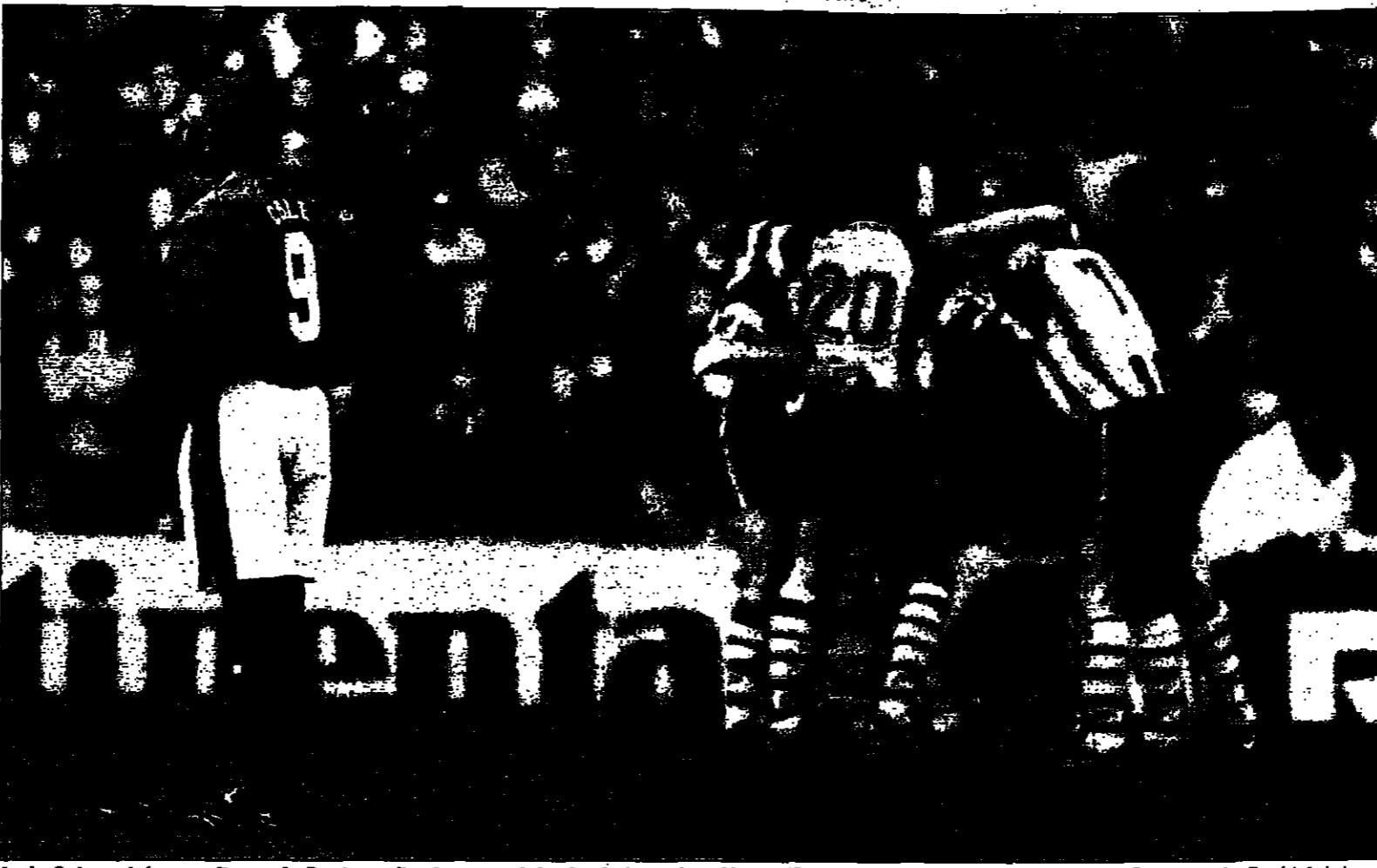
home and away by Dortmund and Juventus.

They are, however, good enough to compete with the best and are learning all the time. Some judicious summer investment and, next season, they could go that one step further.

The question exercising Alex Ferguson's mind this morning is where to improve and who to buy? When you are as good as United the number of players that can improve the team without disrupting the dressing-room and pay structure are rare.

It can be done. "Juventus won the Champions' League last year and they sold and bought," Ferguson said yesterday. They sold Fabrizio Ravanelli, Gianluca Vialli, Paulo Sousa and Pietro Vierchowod among others. The players they brought in included Alen Bokic and Zinedine Zidane and the result is better than the original. It will be a surprise if Juventus do not retain their trophy in Munich on 28 May.

Karel Poborsky has been a disappointment, and United still need a wide right player to provide further options, including allowing David Beckham to play inside more often; they may need a defender to replace the injury-prone Gary



Andy Cole watches as Borussia Dortmund's players celebrate their goal at Old Trafford on Wednesday night

United might not be among the top seeds. With second-placed clubs also involved they could find themselves in a group with Juventus and Barcelona. Only the group winner qualifies automatically, the best two second-placed clubs joining them in the quarter-finals.

The competition begins early, far too early, on 23 July – the day before the fourth cricket Test. That round involves the champions of the minor nations, which will probably include Rangers.

This format may only last a season as Uefa, the governing body of European football, acting on a proposal from Juventus, are planning further reform of their lucrative flagship. They are considering dispensing with two-legged semi-finals and playing a mini-tournament in late May with both semi-finals and the final played within a week in one country.

Brilliant, one might think. This would reduce fixture congestion by freeing two mid-weeks in April. However, anyone leaping to that conclusion has not studied Uefa's empire-building. The two extra midweeks would merely allow

the format to become four groups of six. It will simplify the process but the consequence would be more matches, not fewer. Annual income, already outstripping the World Cup finals at more than £100m, will also go up.

At least this year's late-May fixture bottleneck has been eased. Wednesday night's defeat means United's growing concern about free-to-air rights should be more relatively fresh for the 31 May World Cup tie in Poland and available for the warm-up match with South Africa at Old Trafford on 24 May.

## Altrincham on the edge of precipice

### **Non-League notebook**

RUPERT METCALF

Friar Park is the most likely current No 1 Ian Bennett stalling on signing a new deal.

The Portsmouth chairman, Terry Venables, who now owns a controlling interest in the club, will reveal plans for a new stadium for the First Division club today. The club hope to

have played well without him, notably at Arsenal.

Possibilities are few. Davor Suker is regularly mentioned but one wonders how he would fit in the dressing-room, and he would not be a replacement for Cantona. No doubt Ferguson will soon be headed for Ringway Airport but one answer could be close to home. If Middlesbrough fail to survive, Juninho may be looking for new employment.

United will need to be better next season as it will be harder to qualify. There are six groups of four and, as England are currently seventh in the rankings,

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Photograph: David Ashdown

ALAN NIXON

tegral part in the Italian club's European campaign and is rated one of the best uncapped defenders in Italy. He is reportedly interested in a move to England.

Graham plans to spend around £10m on new faces with five or six players joining his squad in the close season.

Graham has also made moves for Bolton's £2m-rated Alan Thompson, the Brentford striker, Trevor Francis, who is in-

terested in Benfica with his current No 1 Ian Bennett stalling on signing a new deal.

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Photograph: David Ashdown

SCOTTISH FOOTBALL

intend to stay and change it. I would be the first to admit I have made mistakes in the first three years I have been here but I also feel I have learned an enormous amount in that time and I intend to use that experience to the full in the future."

Celtic's managing director, Fergus McCann, said the club's overall "plan of action" had not changed. Chris Waddle is hoping Falkirk go on to lift the Scottish Cup following their shock semi-final victory over Celtic.

Waddle joined Bradford after his brief stint in Scotland and is now back in the Premiership bidding to steer Sunderland clear of relegation. But he has happy memories of his brief spell in Scotland and wishes he could be

fitness. And the 36-year-old former England winger, who made four appearances and scored on his debut against Clydebank, was delighted to hear that the Bairns had reached their first final in 40 years. "I'm very pleased for them," Waddle said. "It's a great achievement for them to beat Celtic and hopefully they can go on and win the cup."

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**COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP:** Hampshire bowlers taken apart while Surrey struggle and the champions fight back

## Irani hammers home his point

### Cricket

**DEREK PRINGLE**  
reports from Chelmsford  
Essex 246 and 373-7  
Hampshire 161

Like a defrosting vindaloo, the last two days at Chelmsford have fluctuated between extremes. With 17 wickets falling on the first day, the umpires were forced to report it to Lord's as the seam bowlers of both sides enjoyed an early season bonanza.

Easier's ascendance in this match is owed to a multitude of efforts, none more than the two

half-centuries by their captain Paul Prichard. But if Prichard fashioned the coffin lid, it was Law and Irani who began to drive the nails home, the latter ending the day unbroken on 95 in a display clearly intended to stick two fingers up at his critics over the winter.

Irani provided the muscle and Law turned on the style as he brought up his 49-ball fifty with a scorching cover drive. Few batsmen keep the face of the bat going through the ball longer than Law, which is why so few deliveries ever seem to beat him.

Like many of his fellow countrymen, Law is blessed with unquestioning confidence and a powerful weight of stroke. Unlike most Australians who get to represent their country at Test level, he is a one-cap wonder.

At 28, youth is not quite on Law's side and his chances of adding to his tally have now receded. Nevertheless, the absence from the Australian squad of such a sparkling talent merely brings home the enormity of the task facing England's bowlers this summer.

At Essex, however, he is cherished and last season, in all competitions, he scored 12 centuries for the county, including three against Hampshire. It should have been another yesterday, but a restrictive field stopped his run spree and he succumbed to the Hampshire captain John Stephenson as he attempted to uproot a bouncer over the slips.

Having had a belated bowl in the first innings, Stephenson was forced into the fray much earlier, despite having been involved in a serious car crash the previous evening. He finished the day with three wickets, including that of his old opening partner Graham Gooch, who was trapped lbw as he fell across his shot.

They may no longer have the hostility of Courtney Walsh or, indeed, the subtlety of Javagal Srinath, but in many ways Gloucestershire's attack was far more effective than Essex's. It was the seam and spinners positive the victory. Steve Young was the pick and will remain in 2001.

Hampshire's attack was far from brilliant, but the Australian could not hold a return catch as he followed through.

Soon afterwards, crease-bound, he was bowled by Steve Whittaker, his first error of the tournament's first session. It took him 12 overs to find his feet again and, after four consecutive positive the victory. Steve Young was the pick and will remain in 2001.

With Carolean Connor unable to operate as well as he did on the opening day, it was left to journeymen like Kevan James to do the donkey work into a strengthening wind.

At the age of 36, James did a good job for Hampshire, taking three wickets, but his presence, along with many like him, are not really doing a service to cricket. It is a point Lord's must address if we are to see the saplings beyond the dead wood.

Fortunately, youth had its head as well and the ever-improving Ashley Cowan, Essex's 21-year-old fast bowler, took a career-best 5 for 49.

and after edging Mark Alleyne just past second slip, he allowed himself no more frivolities around off stump.

It was just as well. At the other end, once the nightwatchman Adrian Lewis had been picked up at slip off Jonathan Lewis, things did not go quite as expected, assuming that Alan A was to occupy the crease all day or as long as possible.

James Whitaker never got established and is probably rarely at his best on pitches like these where the ball is never quite there to hit. Early on, he also provided Shaw Young with an eminent first victim as he attempted to uproot a bouncer over the slips.

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### CRICKET SCOREBOARD

**Britannic Assurance County Championship**

(Second day of four)

**ESSEX v HAMPSHIRE**

**CHAMPSHIRE:** Essex (Spts), with three second-innings wickets standing, are 26 runs ahead of Hampshire (4). Today: 21.00.

**Hampshire won toss**

**ESSEX - First Innings:** 246 (P. Pringle 65; C. Connor 40; A. Cowan 34; D. R. Lewis 21; J. Lewis 77; T. M. Moody 70; A. D. Macmillan 3; H. Cowan 13; S. M. Mithun & H. Patel not out; P. A. Morris 1; Extras 102; Total 348; 102.2 overs).

**Second Innings:** 137 (A. Cowan 46; P. Pringle 46; C. Connor 32; D. R. Lewis 22; J. Lewis 77; T. M. Moody 70; A. D. Macmillan 3; H. Cowan 13; S. M. Mithun & H. Patel not out; P. A. Morris 1; Extras 102; Total 241; 102.2 overs).

**HAMPSHIRE - First Innings:** 161 (J. Lewis 40; P. Pringle 35; C. Connor 21; D. R. Lewis 21; J. Lewis 77; T. M. Moody 70; A. D. Macmillan 3; H. Cowan 13; S. M. Mithun & H. Patel not out; P. A. Morris 1; Extras 102; Total 263; 102.2 overs).

**Second Innings:** 161 (J. Lewis 40; P. Pringle 35; C. Connor 21; D. R. Lewis 21; J. Lewis 77; T. M. Moody 70; A. D. Macmillan 3; H. Cowan 13; S. M. Mithun & H. Patel not out; P. A. Morris 1; Extras 102; Total 263; 102.2 overs).

**Gloucestershire v Durham**

**OLD TRAFFORD:** Durham are 201 for 4 to reply to a first-innings total of 392.

**Second Innings:** 122 (D. R. Lewis 42; J. Lewis 39; T. M. Moody 39; A. D. Macmillan 3; H. Cowan 13; S. M. Mithun & H. Patel not out; P. A. Morris 1; Extras 102; Total 223; 102.2 overs).

**Leicester v Warwickshire**

**CARDIFF:** Warwickshire (one wicket standing) are 145-2 to beat Leicestershire (one wicket standing).

**Nottinghamshire v Lancashire**

**NOTTINGHAM:** Lancashire (one wicket standing) are 145-2 to beat Nottinghamshire (one wicket standing).

**Warwickshire won toss**

**WORCESTERSHIRE - First Innings:** 183; (T. M. Moody 51; D. R. Lewis 40; J. Lewis 39; T. M. Moody 39; A. D. Macmillan 3; H. Cowan 13; S. M. Mithun & H. Patel not out; P. A. Morris 1; Extras 102; Total 285; 102.2 overs).

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**Nottinghamshire - Second Innings:** 183 (T. M. Moody 51; D. R. Lewis 40; J. Lewis 39; T. M. Moody 39; A. D. Macmillan 3; H. Cowan 13; S. M. Mithun & H. Patel not out; P. A. Morris 1; Extras 102; Total 285; 102.2 overs).

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**United we fall**

Where now for the defeated Red Devils, asks Glenn Moore, page 28

**sport**

FRIDAY 25 APRIL 1997 • THE INDEPENDENT

**Spanish Open**

Andy Farrell tracks the goling élite, page 26

**Juninho wants Pele and Zico at Wembley****Football**

**Juninho**, the Brazilian who has done so much to get Middlesbrough to the FA Cup final, hopes to be watched at Wembley by two illustrious compatriots.

"Zico and Pele were great heroes for me and I want to invite them to come and watch me in the Cup final if it's possible," he said. "It would make it even more special for me to walk out at Wembley knowing they were there. It would be wonderful for me and also for Emerson."

Wimbledon have been warned that if they leave England, they are unlikely ever to

be allowed to compete in European club competition.

The club's owner, Sam Hammam, has not completely given up on the idea of moving the Selhurst Park tenants to Dublin, where the Irish would flock to watch Premiership football. The team still has an outside chance of competing in the UEFA Cup, and although Europe's governing body has yet to make an official ruling, they are reluctant to sanction an English club playing home games in a different country.

A UEFA spokesman, Fritz Ahlstrom, said that when

Galatasaray attracted massive crowds to games played in Germany when they were banned from playing at home, they to play other European games there but were not allowed to. "No decision has been made about Wimbledon if they were in Dublin but you can imagine that it would be the same reply as Galatasaray received," he said.

A Wimbledon spokesman said there was no point in commenting until UEFA had notified of any ruling regarding a move to Dublin. "Until then, we refuse to accept that the scheme is dead," he said.

Derby have escaped the possibility of having points deducted by the Premier League thanks to an observant supporter.

Jim Smith, the Derby manager, was in breach of regulations when he named four non-European Union players in his 16 to play in Wednesday's Premiership match against Nottingham Forest. Three can be selected and only the fact that the blunder was spotted by the fan minutes before the kick-off saved Derby from embarrassment and possible punishment.

It meant Smith had to alter

his side and team sheet 15 minutes before the start, and he replaced his Estonian goalkeeper, Mart Poom, with Russell Hoult.

Smith admitted that it was only when a told the first-team coach, Steve McLaren, that he became aware of the blunder. "The referee [Graham Poll] said he would have to report to the Premier League because we had given him the change on the team sheet after the permitted time but I don't think it will be a problem."

"I don't know who the supporter was but I'd like to thank him. It was a good job Russell

Hoult was ready and hadn't had a couple of pints after thinking he wasn't going to be involved!"

The brewers Boddingtons had to pull the plug on an advertising campaign which con-

gratulated Manchester United

on winning their European Cup semi-final. So confident were

they that United would win

that they invested more than £40,000 in advertisements con-

gratulating them, which would

have appeared in newspapers

yesterday morning.

Late-night telephone calls

had to be made to have the ad-

verts withdrawn after United's

defeat. The ads featured a pint

of beer, known as the "cream of Manchester", with a

Dortmund pennant and the slogan "Creamed".

Bryan Hamilton is calling

on young players after losing

three more of his Northern

Ireland squad for next Wednes-

day's Group Nine World Cup

match against Armenia. With five

senior players unavailable

Hamilton has brought in Man-

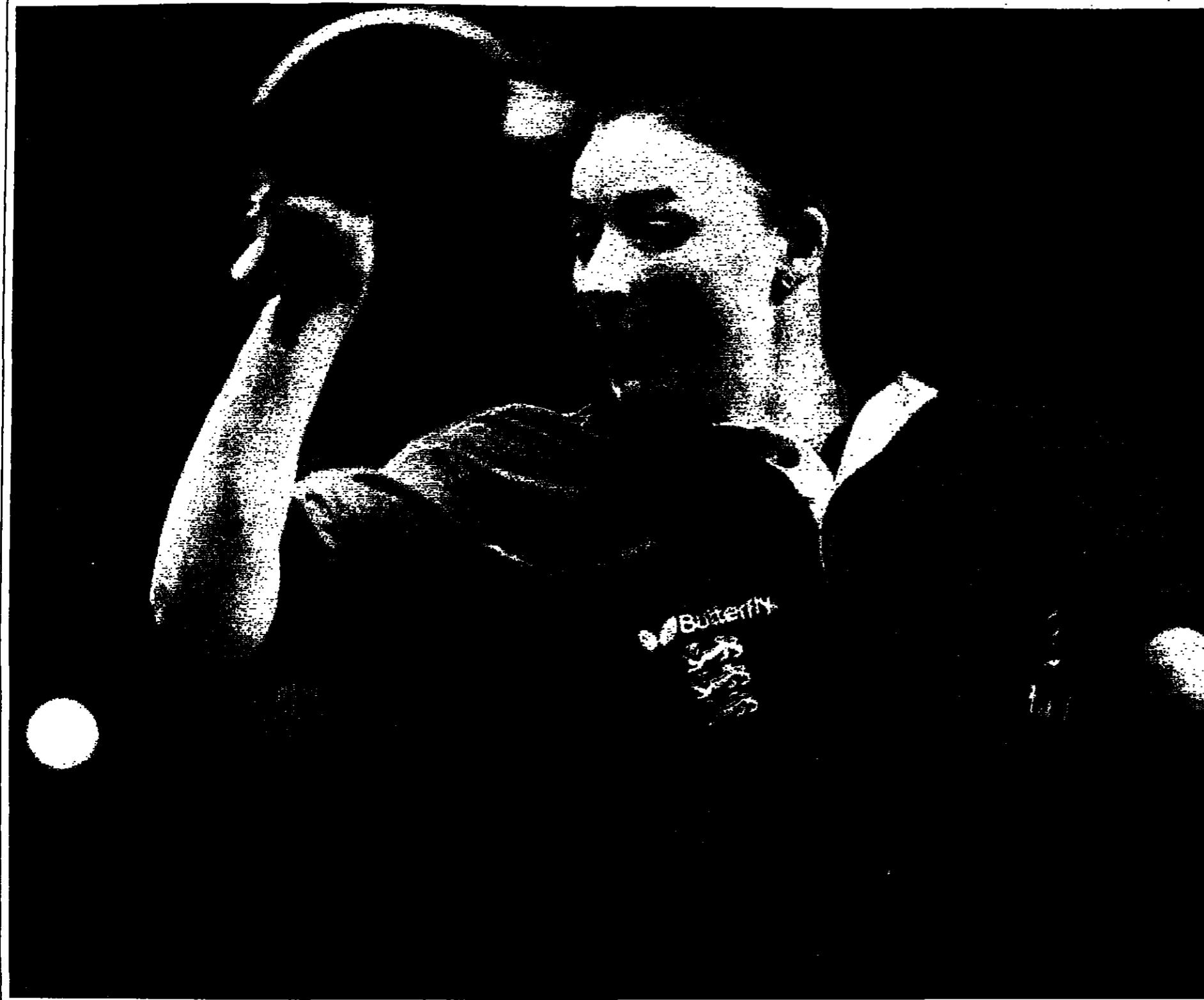
chester City's teenage mid-

fielder, Jeff Whitley, the

Ipswich midfielder, Danny Sou-

ner, and the teenage Wigan

goalkeeper, Roy Carroll.

**England left with the crumbs at top table**

Nicola Deaton, the reigning England champion, falls to a narrow defeat by the Lithuanian Kristina Tottlaitte on the opening day of the World Table Tennis Championships in Manchester's G-Mex Centre yesterday. It was a poor day for the

host nation's women's team, who lost their Category One match 3-1 before facing the stronger South Koreans. In Category Two, Scotland, Ireland and Wales all won their opening men's matches

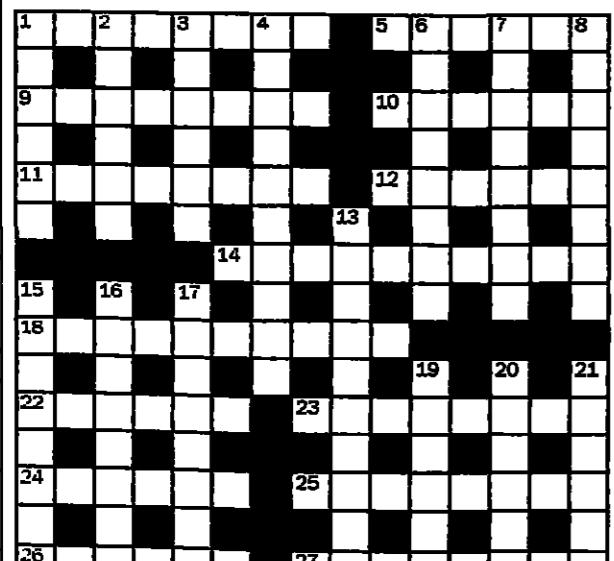
Report, page 28; results, page 29. Photograph: Allsport

**THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD**

No 3282, Friday 25 April

By Phil

Mooley's Solution

**ACROSS**

- 1 Instrument is confiscated by mum fairly promptly (8)
- 5 Civilised prohibition on entering river (6)
- 9 Getting on? Getting on without hesitation, on reflection (8)
- 10 It's left on board games (6)
- 11 and 12 Who'd produce a misplaced "I'd wet car brakes"? (4,4,6)
- 14 Has almost crashed in Verona, coming from German city (10)
- 18 Worthless type that is about to embrace unfashionable dress designer (10)
- 22 and 23 Receiving dues or laying out money? (6,3,5)
- 24 Be a success, I see, though dwelling in middle of garment (6)
- 25 You will bound, we hear, when presents are produced (8)
- 26 Those people will accept alternative hypothesis (6)
- 27 Beech can get chopped up by accident (8)

**DOWN**

- 1 Unwilling to accept a couple of books in a tatty state (6)
- 2 Travelling far, I see: Australia and another continent (6)
- 3 and 17 Content with some company figures? See next page (6,4,4)
- 4 Slip: bringer of gifts and maiden song (5,5)
- 6 and 19 Cave news of Parliament without using quotes? (8,6)
- 7 See you - you finally finished rising into the atmosphere (2,6)
- 8 Sanctity Cockney woman - her sin is corrected (8)
- 13 Legal building providing study programme which involves you? (10)
- 15 Glistening growth to cover top of factory (3,5)
- 16 Frank is under an obligation in a traveller's shop (4,4)
- 17 See 3 down
- 19 See 6 down
- 20 Servant working under car (6)
- 21 Drastic cut's only first of economies (6)

**White the whirlwind running out of puff****Snooker**

GUY HODGSON

It was not difficult to envisage the passing of an era. The nation, or the snooker-watching part of it, has suffered with Jimmy White for so long that each April he is as much a part of the furniture as Dad's favourite chair.

Old ladies see him as the lovable rascal, happy to overlook his indiscretions, boys of all ages empathise with a man whose free spirit refuses to be reined by conformity. Even his hair job, to hide a rapidly widening bald patch, was seen a welcome hint of vanity from someone whose appearance frequently reminded one of the face you see in the mirror the morning after the night before.

Jimmy, in snooker terms, means only one person: "the Whirlwind", whose failure to clinch the Embassy World Championship from six finals has made him the most popular player in the land. The country admires Stephen Hendry and Steve Davis; it adores White.

But maybe not for much longer. White, 34, went out of the World Championship just before midnight on Wednesday and into the limbo land known as outside the world's top 16. Next season his progress will be through a minefield of extra qualification matches. Young

players will be waiting to take pots at an erstwhile hero.

The words after his 10-9 defeat were familiar. "The reason I took my snooker was Jimmy," Anthony Hamilton, his conqueror, said. "I think I'd rather beaten anyone but him." Almost everyone adheres to this ritual, except the sentiments, although genuinely felt, are coming more often these days. And earlier in tournaments.

White lost his first 11 matches this season and his earnings for 1996-97 are little more than £60,000, which represents a fortune for most but a severe decline of income for someone who has picked up £3m in his career. "He'll come straight back," Hamilton insisted. "He's different class."

Others are not so sure. White had been 5-1 and 8-4 in front against Hamilton and although he has been buried by an avalanche of lost frames before - most notably when he lost 10 in a row against Hendry in the 1992 world final - he has not surrendered such an advantage very often at the Crucible.

Certainly not as slowly. The last few frames were played at a ponderous pace, each shot weighed down with tension. Thirty-eight minutes for the 16th frame, 30 for the next, 44 and 28 for the final two. In times gone by, White has rattled off four frames in the

time

it was taking to complete

one. The last was a particular agony, an amalgamation of missed pots and snookers. White was 37-1 up at one stage but succumbed to a break of 54.

"I'm shocked," he said. "My form in practice could not have been better leading up to the championships and although I knew how good Anthony was I feel I had enough ammunition to see him off."

"I still love the game so there

won't be panic stations. I'll

have to cut my holidays short

this year to get in some practice.

I'll be back. I've had so much support from my fans over the years I owe it to them."

James Wattana, the 12th seed,

had enough ammunition but

was scraping around for shells

before beating Graeme Dott in another final frame match.

Ahead 6-2, the Thai lost all semblance of rhythm and one point trailed 8-7. "I got angry with myself for letting him off the hook," he said. "He played better than me but I was the lucky one."

Never more so than in the de-

ciding frame when Dott, a 19-

year-old Scot, potted a long red

only for a double kiss to halt his

progress. The white was nesting

on a red in such a manner that

neither the black or the pink

were visible. Snookered, Dott

lost his chance and Wattana

sneaked through.

Results, Digest, page 29

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